

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
G. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 483.

FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 2ND, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]

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No. 483.] For the Week ending April 2nd, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

The Widow's Experience.

MRS. HANNAH BATES—Widow Bates, as she was generally designated—was one of the most prominent inhabitants of the straggling village of Hayling. She lived in a four-roomed cottage on the outskirts of the village—just off “the street”—and her orphan niece Susie, a young woman of twenty-one, resided with her.

There was probably no man or woman in the world who did more good in proportion to his or her means than Widow Bates; the poor of the district blessed her from the bottom of their hearts, and the inhabitants generally were loud in their praises of the good-natured woman.

Aunt and niece were seated in the narrow porch enjoying the cool of the evening and pleasantly occupied in discussing the weightier matters of the day.

“Did you hear that Sir Henry’s new steward was to arrive to-day, aunt?” asked Susie.

“Yes, my dear,” replied her aunt. “I wonder how long he will suit? The Baronet is very changeable and suspicious; why, he won’t let anyone receive rents for him, but has everything paid over into his own hands! Oh, well, it’s no business of ours!”

Susie was about to make a remark when her aunt uttered an exclamation.

“My!” And she leant forward to look down the road. “Who’s this coming?”

Susie glanced along the dusty road, and saw the figure of a middle-aged man, dressed in black. The stranger quickened his steps as he caught sight of them; he was evidently coming to pay them a visit.

“Mrs. Bates?” asked the stranger as he reached the gate. He raised his hat and looked very affable.

“Yes, sir.”

“My name is Welkin—Horatio Welkin.”

“Oh!” inwardly ejaculated the widow. “What a name!”

“I have come to act as steward to Sir Henry Bence in Hayling,” continued the new comer, “and I am
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anxious to find a suitable apartment until other provision is made for me. My tastes are simple and my wants few. I should like a bedroom in a house where I can be as one of the family. An elderly man, with a slight limp, told me that I should find what I wanted here.”

“Ah, that was old Newsome,” returned the widow. “Yes, sir, I have a room to let. Would you like to come and see it?”

Mr. Horatio Welkin said he would, and glanced approvingly at Susie as he followed Widow Bates into the house.

The room was suitable, as were the other arrangements proposed, and the inclusive terms came within the prescribed limits. The bargain was struck, and the new steward was quickly installed as lodger in the neat and homely residence of Widow Bates.

Mr. Horatio Welkin entered upon his duties on the following morning, and the good people of Hayling were rather surprised to find that he succeeded so well in pleasing the Squire. But he was the kind of man who pleases everybody. He had a bland, affable manner of dealing with those who came in contact with him that won golden opinions; before he had been in the village a month the inhabitants wondered how they had been able to get along without him.

He was the life and soul of the place, and such a good man. He was a regular attendant at church, took part in the organisation of cricket matches, started a fund for the better support of the village almshouses; in short, he was indispensable, and everyone sang his praises. Everyone! Well, there was one exception; old Newsome did not like him, and said so to Widow Bates.

“I don’t like him,” he said, shaking his grey head. “He’s too short in the leg. Though,” he added thoughtfully, “that don’t interfere with his stewardin’, I’ll own.”

“He’s a good man,” sighed the widow, “and I don’t know what we should do without him. He’s such a

scholar! You should hear him explain the texts; he does it better than the minister. He knows Greek, too. You know that the Testament was written in Greek first, don't you? No? Well, you know it now."

"I dunno as I'm altogether agin his platform," observed Newsome, who had lately attended a political meeting, and was using the set terms whenever he could, "but I can't quite take to him."

Uncle Nat was known to be stubborn in his opinions, so Widow Bates said no more on the subject. She thought it was time to bid the old man good-bye and make her way home, but Newsome continued:

"I don't like him, and I'd keep my eyes on Susie, if I was you. A gal like that'd turn the head of any man, 'specially a man like that, and he might turn hers."

An angry word rose to the widow's lips, but she restrained herself. Old Newsome was very well in his way, but what could anyone expect from *him*?

The widow's reflections as she pursued her homeward way were not quite pleasant.

"Why should he not have his eye on Susie? He is a good man, and I believe he would make a worthy husband for any woman."

But a pang went through her at the thought, and her eyes filled with tears. Why?

After that, in spite of herself, she kept on the watch for signs of attachment between her niece and the steward, but she was never able to detect anything to give colour to Uncle Nat's suspicion.

It was Tuesday morning, just a fortnight after the talk with Uncle Nat. Susie and the widow were preparing breakfast; Mr. Horatio Welkin had not yet descended.

Rat-tat!

"A letter! I wonder if it is for us or for Mr. Welkin?" cried Susie as she went into the passage.

She came hurrying back with a black-bordered envelope in her trembling hand.

"Oh, auntie, it's from Uncle John, and it's addressed to you!"

Widow Bates took it without a word, tore open the envelope, and read it. Her sister was dead. She had died on the previous day. She was to be buried on the Saturday. "I may tell you," the letter concluded, "that she has disposed of her own property by will, and that she has left you £2,000."

For a few seconds the widow remained silent, while Susie took the letter and read it. Mrs. Bates and her sister had not been good friends for years. Her sister had married well, and occupied a much higher position than the widow, who felt that she was slighted.

"And I have said such dreadful things about her," murmured the elder woman, "and now she is lying dead!" She burst into tears as she thought of the past. Perhaps it was her own fault, after all, that they had been estranged.

* * * * *

Two months passed away, and the villagers had an item of intelligence to discuss. Widow Bates was to be married to Mr. Horatio Welkin.

"So it's true, eh?" asked Newsome, the next time Mrs. Bates took him a few vegetables from her garden.

"Why shouldn't I marry him?" queried the widow. "I shall be a lonely woman when Susie gets married—she won't stop an old maid all her life, bless her!—and he is a good man. She's away; and now he has taken a house in the street—I am very dull."

"Have you told Susie yet?" asked the old man nervously.

"There will be time enough to do that when she comes home. But what has she to do with it?"

"Nothin' much. Only—only—she's in love with him herself!"

"Fiddlesticks!" snapped the widow. "You must have been drinking to tell me to my face that my niece has fallen in love with him an' I not know it. Whatever makes you say such a foolish thing?" she added with questionable logic.

"I seen him a-kissin' her in the porch one day just before your sister died. She saw me go by—he didn't—and she came to me a little while after and asked me not to tell you yet, as they didn't want it to be known for a time that they was to be engaged. Then your sister died, and then Susie went up to London to stay with her cousins awhile." And Uncle Nat looked the widow straight in the face.

Mrs. Bates remained silent. The only change in her face was that the mouth closed firmly.

"Thank you for speaking out, Uncle Nat," she said thoughtfully, after a long pause. "Perhaps you would like a bottle of ale next time I am passing?"

"Thank you kindly, Mrs. Bates; it *would* be a comfort." And they parted.

When Mr. Horatio Welkin next visited the cottage, his manner was particularly winning.

"I think it is time that you turned those two thousand pounds to better account than keeping it in the bank, Hannah," he remarked. "I have mentioned this matter before; but now, as your future husband, I think I may press it upon you."

"Certainly," returned the widow quietly. She knew nothing of financial matters, but she was evolving a little scheme in her mind. She would use him as a tool, as he had intended to use her. She would allow him to carry this thing through, with the idea that he was doing it for his own benefit; and when he had accomplished it, she would laugh at him and show him up publicly! How Hayling would ridicule him! He would be obliged to leave the village. Oh, what a difference between Horatio as he seemed to the people of Hayling and the rascal he was proving himself to be! But he had been found out!

"I know of a very profitable investment," he continued; "one that will yield much more interest than you now receive. See how many things you could obtain with the additional income!"

"We should be able to do so much more for the village with this extra income, eh?" said the widow innocently, inwardly chuckling at his coming downfall.

"Of course!" he exclaimed.

"Then I think it had better be carried out at once. We ought not to let an opportunity slip."

"Quite so," responded Welkin with alacrity. "I will bring the transfer to-morrow."

The next day the necessary transfer deed was brought. It was signed by the seller, and had the name of a London stockbroker on the back. On receipt of the cash or cheque, the deed would be lodged for registration in her name. She wrote the cheque, and left it open. "It will facilitate the transaction if it is not crossed," was the reason given; and the widow agreed.

"It seems all in order," said the widow.

"Quite" assured Welkin. "You can leave that to me! The broker has the certificate for this stock. When did you say that your niece was returning?"

"The day after to-morrow." And again the widow indulged in an inward chuckle.

"Exactly. I shall be going up to London to-morrow

evening; I have business to transact for Sir Henry on the day after, and then I can conclude this matter. I may not return till the end of the week, but I will write to you so that you shall know that it has been carried through. I shall not be here, then, when your niece arrives."

"Very well," returned the widow. "But come back as soon as you can."

About noon on the following morning, old Newsome hobbled up to her door; he usually called if he were going past. Widow Bates made him comfortable with a glass of ale, and took him into her confidence concerning her plans for retaliating upon the steward. He laughed quietly and sipped the beverage handed to him by his hostess; then he asked a question or two and departed.

"I don't see through this yet," he muttered as he limped along towards his own dwelling. "Must think it over."

Uncle Nat seemed to find a great deal to think about that afternoon. He hobbled to the gate after dinner with a chair and a stool, he seated himself on the former and placed a glass and a bottle of good old ale on the latter, then he lighted his pipe. There he sat all through the afternoon apparently in deep thought. A sharp observer would, however, have noticed that he kept a watch on the road.

It was about seven o'clock when he espied Mr. Welkin, portmanteau in hand, coming down the road. Uncle Nat hastily pushed the things aside and opened the gate.

"Good evenin', sir," said Newsome respectfully as the other arrived in front of the cottage. "I should like to speak to you for a minute about my parish allowance."

"I am sorry, Newsome, that I really have not time just now. I have to catch the train."

"There ain't no train due for fifteen minutes, and this won't take long," replied the old man nervously. "I didn't think as you would refuse me a minute on that point. You know you promised yesterday." His fingers were twitching, and he was clearly in a state of great excitement.

Welkin hesitated, inwardly anathematising the man, but, knowing that he had time, finally consented. Newsome stifled a sigh of relief and half led, half dragged the other into the front room.

"Make haste, please," urged the unwilling visitor. "Why are you locking the door?" he asked as Uncle Nat turned the key and dropped it into his pocket.

"'Cos I've got somethin' to say. Look here!" Newsome took from a corner a long broom-handle to one end of which was tied a formidable carving-knife. "If you move, I'll dig this into you—understand? All right! Now listen."

"You've got a cheque out of Widow Bates on false pretences, as they call it. It ain't no good denyin' it; I can see it in your eyes, and I know it's in your black heart! Don't you come that game, now! I'm old and

lame, but I've got strength enough to run this into you, and I'll do it!"

The steward retreated before the vicious flourish of the dangerous weapon.

"I don't understand much about these things, but I know that you can get that money because the cheque is open. Why didn't you have it crossed? Why are you going to London in such a hurry? Why are you running away from Susie? I'll tell you. Keep back, now! You've allowed the devil to get hold on you, and you're goin' to hook it with the widow's money! But I saw through it all, and I made up my mind to stop you. If you hadn't come in, I'd have hounded you down the street, but what I'd have stopped you!"

"You are mad! This is an outrage!" cried the entrapped man.

"I'm willin' to take the risk of what I'm doin'," returned the old man doggedly. "Give up that cheque!"

"I shall not!"

"Then I'll disable you with this, and hunt your things over till I find it," said Newsome fiercely. He was thoroughly in earnest, and he had Welkin in a corner of the room where there was no space for dodging. He deftly placed the point of the knife against the other's throat. "Give it up!"

Welkin tried to argue, and to insist that he could not get at the cheque unless the knife were taken away; but Newsome kept him pinned against the wall, and finally the rascal took out his pocket-book, felt for the paper, and tore it in pieces as his captor bade him.

Smiling grimly, Newsome backed to the door, unlocked it without turning round, and hastily ran—yes, ran—into the street, where he knew he was safe. The steward came out, glared at Uncle Nat (who waved his weapon warningly), and hurried down the street towards the station.

When the truth became known on the following day, Uncle Nat was the hero of the village, and everyone was filled with wonder at his daring, and at the rascality of the man whom they had all admired so much.

Widow Bates was so overwhelmed that she could only press his hand in thankfulness at having been saved by him from heavy loss.

Welkin was never seen again, thus proving the accuracy of the old man's suspicions.

Susie returned that day and learnt the truth from her aunt and from Newsome. It was not a merry party that evening at the cottage of Widow Bates, yet there was a goodly share of that quiet happiness which one feels at having escaped a great trouble.

"Suppose either of us had married him!" exclaimed Susie. And they both wept tears of mingled grief and gladness.

Uncle Nat will never want for the necessaries of life; the widow has settled upon him—despite his remonstrances—one quarter of the amount of the cheque that was torn up in his front room.

G. MERRIAM.



THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

CHAPTER XV.

But see what a mess the *Terrible* is making of the *Gefion* yonder in the very thick of things. Some of the ships are fighting at little more than pistol-shot distance; and the *Terrible* is well within half a knot of the dismantled *Gefion*, when Commander Madden, careering to starboard, trumpets forth through the uproar in a kind of German: "Haul down your flag, or I'll ram!" And half a minute later down sails the flag of the *Gefion*; and half a minute later still, down dives the *Gefion* herself, to her final harbour at the bottom of the Hwang Hai, which swallows with her all that part of her crew which a pinnacle of the *Terrible* is unable to rescue.

The *Revenge* has not lodged a 12-inch shell in the fore-port magazine of the *Majestueuse* in vain. The French ship shudders,—then, a little forward of amidships, there is a red belch that spouts high above her mast, and curves outward in a lurid rain far over the sea—then there is a long reverberation of clattering thunder,—and the *Majestueuse* bursts, and sinks. But this row is mingled with another, caused by the ram of the foundering *Pascal*, which is working and ravaging below the central armour-belt of the *Revenge*. The three vessels disappear from sight within a minute of each other.

There, on the far starboard edge of the British line of battle, the *Iphigenia*—on board of which is Fate—is levelling her whole port battery in one incessant roll of Gardners and Nordenfeldts, of six-pounders and three-pounders, upon a small approaching second-class torpedo-boat; growling harshly, is she, like a hound which bristles and snarls, retreating backward at the sudden apparition of an advancing lion.

The torpedo-boat lances one of her needles of steel, but it is caught by a wave, tossed upwards in a whiff of spray, and sent flying to starboard, where it explodes under the stern of the French first-class battery cruiser *Aréthuse*. As the tubes of the torpedo-boat sends forth another of the explosives, the ram of the *Iphigenia* passes into and over her small assailant; the torpedo explodes ten yards away, but tears a hole in the forward protective bulkhead of the *Iphigenia*. She commences to settle down by the starboard bow.

But what is this new phenomenon which now suddenly appals every eye that beholds it—the eyes of friend and of foe alike: something appalling by its mere novelty, not hitherto seen in sea or land warfare—something in the air—with all the properties and the powers of a spirit of evil?

It is a balloon—narrow, low, and long—French in origin. It can be steered backward and forward even in the teeth of a light wind; and its operators have the power of dropping dynamite shells with a steel casing, containing liquid oxygen and blasting gelatine, upon the hostile ships. It has come sailing with the light breath of the monsoon from a French ship, which has studiously kept far on the outskirts of the battle.



SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed; however, but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Rosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

John is brought before Yen and they quarrel. The former fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. Meanwhile, the British China squadron, failing to obtain the promised assistance from Japan, engages the Allied fleet.

It is not a toy; nor is it sent up as a curiosity for the amusement of the British ships. It becomes stationary high up over the *Barfleur*, a black dot is seen to disengage itself from it, and a moment or two afterwards, ninety-five British sailors are dead, and the engines of the *Barfleur* are no longer there. Then, sparing of its shells, it moves on in another direction, and then swiftly in another, and another, letting fall each time on the ships below, its deadly missiles. Except two, which fall into the sea, every shell destroys a ship. One bullet of a rifle would be sufficient to prove fatal to it, but it is high, its movements are swift and sudden, and when at last it tumbles, pierced, into the sea, the battle is all but over. It has done its work well.

This had been the wisdom of France in the times of peace: that she had not despised the ingenious man and his ingenuities; she had invited the thinker; she had welcomed the dreamer of dreams.

This was the second time since the beginning of this war that the British had come into contact with the *Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée*, and had shuddered intensely at the contact.

But we are an ocean-race! Every cock on his own dunghill—and England on the sea. Had it not been for the French balloon, the British would very likely have won the battle by five seaworthy ships, and one unseaworthy; as it was, they won by two seaworthy ships, and one unseaworthy.

The last shot fired was fired by the *Iphigenia* at a German third-class cruiser, which she sank. This was the last but two of the Allied vessels left afloat; the other two had some time since struck their flag, and were now sinking fast.

Besides the *Iphigenia*, which had engines, funnels, screws, and rudder intact, but a considerable crank bow-wards, there were afloat of the British craft the *Daphne*, a twin-screw sloop, which was practically uninjured, and the *Barfleur*, which was floating like a mere log unable to move a yard. There were only fifty-seven men left alive in her.

The *Iphigenia* had one boat, and the *Daphne* two, still capable of passing over the water; and these were soon out, two of them making toward the *Barfleur* to take off her crew, and one in the direction of one of the still floating two ships of the Allies, for the purpose of rescue.

The sea was oily smooth; the breeze had died to a mere breath; the sun had climbed to noon.

All was still. Over four buried navies the water swung lazily—as a cradle which one has ceased to rock, of its own motion.

Weirdly sad is that vast and wandering grave of the sailor; and careless is the great heart of the sea.

So intent were all who still floated during this quiet noon-tide in the central ocean upon the humane work of rescue, that no one noticed the swift approach upon them of a growing cloud of smoke from the east, and it was only when a shrapnel shell came screaming through the fore-armed tube of the already shattered *Barfleur*, that the British sailors, to their consternation, discovered that yet another enemy was upon them.

Presently, as though the new arrivals had found an entire fleet to oppose them, the air was full of fire.

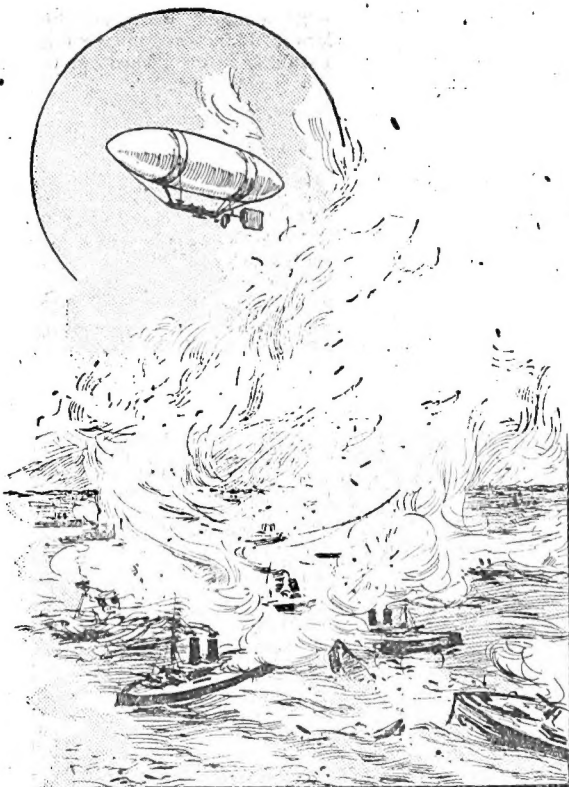
Five large cruisers were seen to be steaming at full speed upon the small remnants of the four fleets.

But cruisers of what nation? They carried no flag!

The two vessels of the Allies—small torpedo-boat destroyers—had long since struck their colours. And at once, as a precautionary measure, the three British vessels did the same.

But it made no difference! The rain of fire continued.

Happily, before the boat of the *Iphigenia* reached the *Barfleur*, the *Barfleur* dipped, and sank. So also did one of the Allied ships, and also one of the *Daphne's* boats with her crew. The other of the *Daphne's* boats, and the *Iphigenia's* boat, at once turned back to hurry to their ships.



Every shell destroys a ship.

For the moment the *Iphigenia* was still out of effective range of the shells of this strange enemy; but one of the screws of the *Daphne* was shattered by a semi-submarine explosion.

At once, as their two boats reached them, the two British ships turned tail under forced draught, flying straight westward from this sudden, dread, mysterious foe.

Both were very swift; but the *Daphne* could now only move with half her speed. On board the *Iphigenia* men were working at the pumps.

The strange enemy, seeing that there was no longer any target for their shot, ceased fire, and slackened speed. Only the swiftest of the five cruisers was told off to continue the chase of the two fugitives.

She gained upon them both, especially upon the *Daphne*; but a stern chase is a long chase, and it was an hour before the first shell, shattering every gun in the *Daphne's* central battery, warned her that further flight was useless.

The *Daphne* had again hoisted her ensign, and now again she struck it; and again was surrender met by a hail of shot from this extraordinary adversary.

The *Daphne* at once re-boasted her colours, spun sharply round to port, and bore straight down upon her pursuer.

Her commander was at least determined to sell the life of his ship dearly.

But he was met by such a cataract of shell and shot that he perceived that he must certainly founder before accomplishing the ram which he meditated.

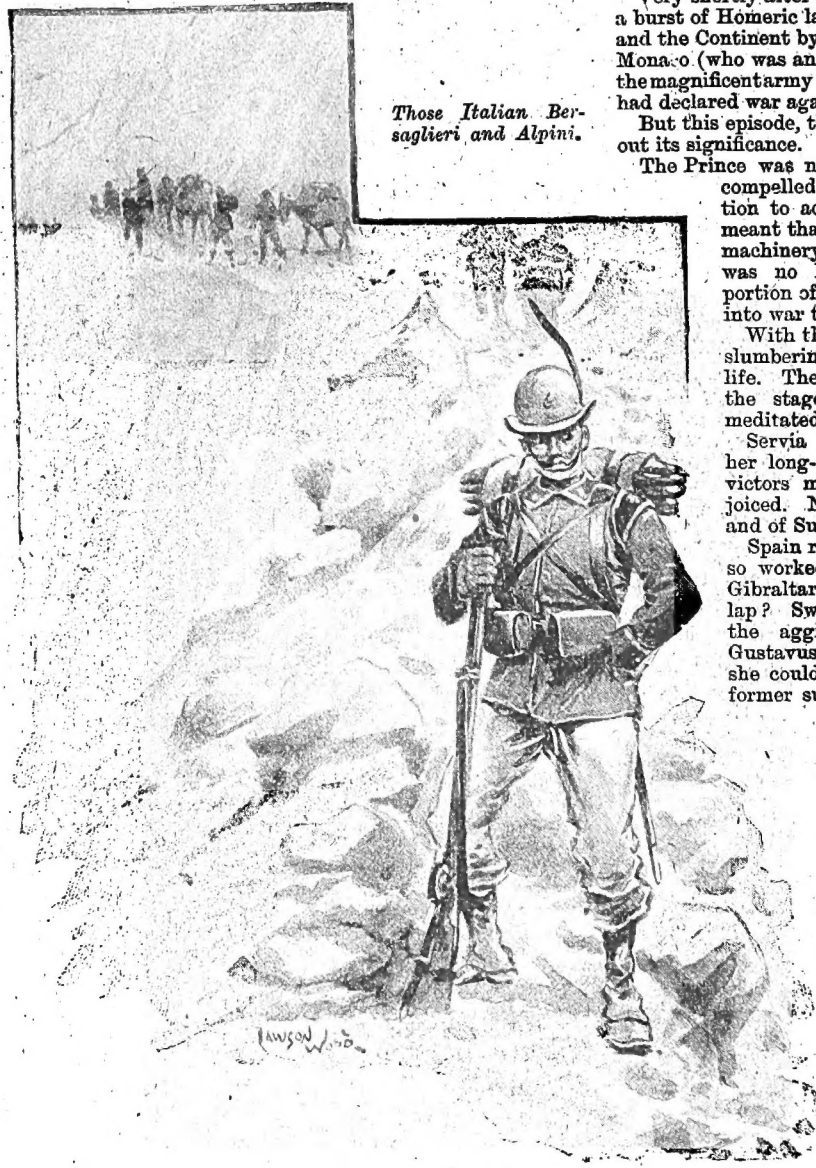
He determined, far off as he was, to risk the launching of his last torpedo.

It proved a happy inspiration.

The little needle of disaster went hastening, in steadfast,

headlong flight, in spite of sweeping wave and baffling spray, straight upon its victim. It fastened upon her beam at the level of her armoured deck a few inches below the water-line, and burst.

Those Italian Bersagliers and Alpini.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE SUICIDE OF EUROPE.

At the time of the battle in the Hwang-Hai all Europe was at war.

Very shortly after the defeat of the Allies at Shoreham, a burst of Homeric laughter was caused all over England and the Continent by the announcement that the Prince of Monaco (who was an independent sovereign, and possessed the magnificent army of about sixty body-guard carabineers), had declared war against England.

But this episode, though amusing in itself, was not without its significance.

The Prince was not a mere pantomimist. He had been compelled by some intricacy of the actual situation to act as he had acted, and his action only meant that so complex and finely-poised was the machinery of modern European policy, that it was no longer possible for any considerable portion of Europe to be at war without plunging into war the rest of it also.

With the sound of the first cannon a thousand slumbering passions of the peoples started into life. The hour had struck for the placing upon the stage of a thousand schemes of long-meditated revenge, avarice, and aggression.

Servia rejoiced. Her secret vow to settle her long-standing account with her Bulgarian victors might now be redeemed. Bulgaria rejoiced. Now at last would she be free of Tsar and of Sultan alike.

Spain rubbed her sleepy eyes! How if events so worked in this upheaval of the world, that Gibraltar should once again fall into her lucky lap? Sweden looked round with something of the aggressive enterprise of her old hero, Gustavus Adolphus, wondering if now, at last, she could not accomplish the deliverance of her former subjects, the Finns, from the oppressive hand of Russia.

The Cretans, certain now that the Sultan would have his hands full of matters far more important than their small selves, girt on the dirk and carbine of massacre. Austria turned her eyes toward Salonika with languishing, and her right hand crept out to steal.

Roumania dreamt that Russia's only motive for war was to furnish an excuse for her destruction, and rushed in arms to her frontiers. Italy had territories still "unredeemed": and was not this the time to "redeem" them?

Denmark had been nipped and curtailed, and her day was come for vengeance; Portugal was alert to stab in the back her British rival in Africa in the hour of his preoccupation.

At Athens, at Belgrade, at Sophia—from London to Batoum,—from St. Petersburg to Megalo-Kastro,—the sword leapt from its scabbard.

Mobil!

The Sultan pressed his fez tighter upon his head, sitting luxuriously among cushions; and the panic of the sinner in the day of his calamity gripped coldly at this man's heart. He had heard that the main body of the Servian army was moving eastward from its head-quarters at Knizevatz, and were being massed upon Nisch and Vranja, while fresh levies were being made in order to form a strong reserve; and he had hardly heard it, when the further news arrived that a bloody battle between Servian

The strange vessel started, and leapt, and, with a cough that rent her, threw her fragments over the sea. She was the Japanese cruiser *Sado*.

A minute later, while the *Iphigenia* was still hastening to the scene of the conflict, the *Daphne* sank with all hands.

The *Iphigenia* was now miles out of sight of the other four Japanese cruisers.

She continued her course eastward, very slowly sinking all the time.

About midnight of the next day she was beached on a sandy bottom close to Kiao-Chan.

She had on board a hundred and eighty men.

and Bulgarian divisions of infantry had occurred near Vlassina, in which the Servians had been routed with heavy loss.

The messengers of evil followed fast one upon the other, like the messengers of Job.

The same night a considerable Austrian body crossed the Save, and quietly occupied Belgrade.

The next morning Austrian troops bivouacking in the open spaces of the city, and Austrian officers taking *déjeuner* on the boulevards, met the astonished eyes of the waking citizens.

It seemed as if the Golden Horn was in danger of being broken.

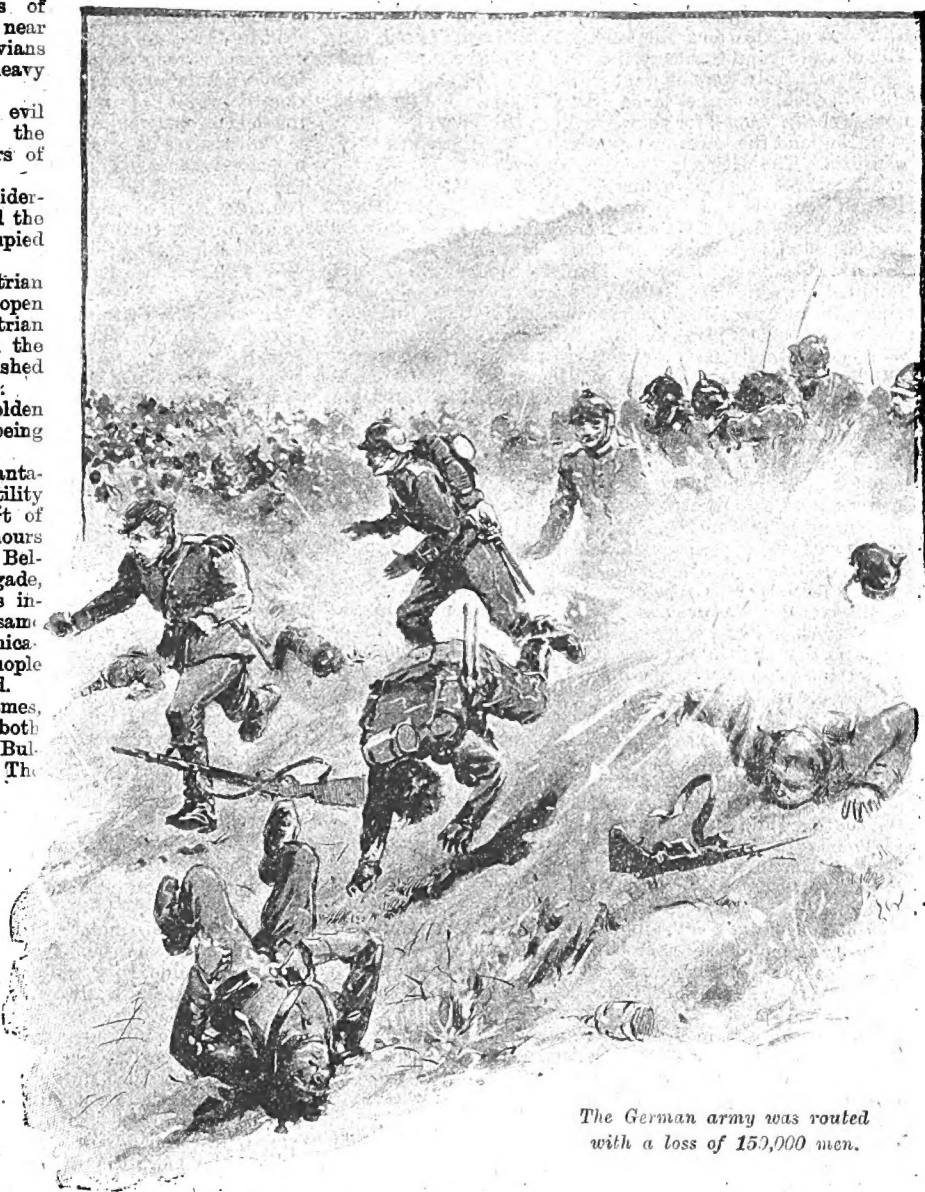
For this action was tantamount to an act of hostility against Russia on the part of Austria. Within a few hours after the occupation of Belgrade, another Austrian brigade, without firing a shot, was installed in Semendria. The same day telegraphic communication between Constantinople and Odessa was interrupted.

Macedonia was in flames, and a land of *émeutes*,—both Anti-Turkish and Anti-Bulgarian,—from end to end. The Vali of Salonika was assassinated and mutilated in the streets of his city.

The Porte had called out the last class of rediffs, and rediffs from Smyrna and the Tripolitaine, to the number of 70,000 were being transported, and massed at Salonika, with a view to the protection of the frontier line. Fifty thousand men, still left round Stamboul, were distributed along the chain of forts from Roumalie Kavak to the Golden Horn. A fleet of Turkish torpedo-boats without torpedoes, and ironclads without ammunition, steamed northward through the Bosphorus. But before they reached the latitude of Midia, a fleet of Russian Black-Sea-battle-ships, torpedo-boats, and transports crowded with 90,000 troops from Odessa, had shelled and occupied Bourgas. (Bourgas is in direct railway communication with Constantinople.)

The uncalled-for action of Austria in occupying the two Servian towns was Russia's defence for her occupation of the Bulgarian town.

Events followed one upon another with an ever increasing frightfulness of rapidity. Developments which at other times would have required weeks for their outcome, now required only hours. Europe was whirling in a delirium of haste. The next day half-a-dozen sotnias of



The German army was routed with a loss of 150,000 men.

irresponsible Cossacks pushed forward across the Galician frontier to Lub'ca; and without delay Austria declared formal war against Russia.

Here was a topsy-turvydom of things—brought about by the festering greed and the old malice of the nations. Germany was the pledged ally of Austria; Germany was the pledged ally of Russia against England; and Russia and Austria were at war!

Look, too, at those Italian Bersaglieri and Alpini, climbing like chamois over the Alps, with batteries borne on nimble-hoofed mules, by the Mont Cenis route. Italy means to get back, now or never, old Savoy—which is her Alsace-Lorraine—and is engaged in mountain warfare on the one hand with French Dragoons and Mountain-chasseurs among the Alps, and, on the other, is shelling with her

fleet the batteries that defend the Riviera, preparatory to landing three Corps, her 2nd, 4th, and 8th, in the neighbourhood of Nice and Mentone. Yet Germany was the Ally of Italy; and Germany was the Ally of France; and France and Italy were at war!

Mobil, then, ye sons of men! Set briskly to it—for it is now or never. *Mobil* for your lives!

In England there was no longer a nation: there was only a Militia. The nation had become an army.

After three days of a terrific artillery battle between British ironclads and the forts de la Floride, de l'Heure, and de Tourneville, a British Army under Lord Roberts had occupied, first Havre, and then Harfleur. A series of disastrous battles, between Harfleur and Yvetot, had followed, in which the British, though outnumbered, were generally successful in claiming a nominal victory. But they made no decided advance. The hitherto unknown results of modern contrivances were found to make victory almost as fatal as defeat. The very small bullets of the Lee-Metfords and Lebel rifles—the enormous range of the magazine rifle—the use of smokeless powder—were found to be elements whose effects were, on the whole, ten times greater than had been anticipated. Division after Division hurried over from Britain to the support of the Havre Army; and Corps after Corps of the French massed upon Rouen, upon Harfleur, upon Confreville, and the neighbouring towns to oppose them. It became a question of men.

Five British ships, which were all that was left of the Mediterranean squadron after a great engagement in the Bay of Algieras, were reducing Marseilles to a heap of ruins, at the very time when the Italian ships were engaged in an incessant artillery duel with the forts along the Riviera coast. Yet Italy and England were not formally allies.

North and south a dark cloud of tragedy widened over France. In less than six weeks after the commencement of the war her 7th, 14th, 15th and 16th Corps d'Armée had ceased to exist, in consequence of signal Italian victories in the south; while in the north a steady deluge of British regiments had accounted for seven more of her corps. Toulon, the impregnable, was in the hands of General Ricotti. Havre was a British base.

Already the territorial army was being detached to form part of the active army, and the reserve of the territorial army being mobilised for probable service.

France was shrinking under the intolerably harsh frown of Britain. The Joy of the whole earth was about to perish.

Britain herself, in her tough, silent way, was in the grip of bitter suffering. The Government had established public granaries all over the kingdom. But the price of bread was prohibitive. Whole villages and towns were perishing of hunger.

Singular as it now seems, she had had no separate cable connecting her telegraphically with South Africa, which was to a large extent her life. When she was disconnected with the Continent by her enemies, she found herself disconnected also with her most important colonies. It was necessary for her to adopt the slow method of sending out a small dispatch vessel round the Cape in order to recall the Australian and Pacific Squadrons home. The Suez Canal had long since been blown up by the French officials at Port Said.

At the Cape a naval battle had resulted, by some few ships, in a victory for the Allies, in consequence of overwhelming odds. Cape Town and all the British sea-board of South Africa had been shelled. Sierra Leone also was in the hands of the French.

But Australia and the sea-board of India were already comparatively safe. The enemy needed all their still floating navies nearer home.

On the strongly-fortified German coast England's success had been hardly less than marvellous. A small fleet of

British war-ships and troopers had appeared at the entrance of the Kiel Canal, and captured Tronning.

Then the two great branches of the Teutonic race measured strengths. England had sent 100,000 men to fight a nation boasting the most exquisite military organisation the world has ever conceived, and capable of placing in the field an army approaching three millions.

The first result was mere disaster for the invaders,—but not moral defeat. They retained Tronning, and, by a *coup*, the remnants of the scattered army under Sir Evelyn Wood possessed itself of Stralsund. They did it under cover of a bombardment from the sea by a British fleet, among the British ships being the three Swedish cruisers *Edfors*, *Unica*, and *Gefl*, which suddenly appeared, and joined in the action.

Nor was this Britain's last word to Germany.

It can never be that guns and swords alone can rule the world. The nation with the strongest heart, and the hardest brow, she is the mistress.

What happened at Havre, happened at Kiel and Stralsund. England with astonishing, steady pertinacity sent men to fight—only, *here*, the rigour of the thing was greater, the flame hotter.

In all that low-lying tract of land between Wismar, Neu Brandenburg, Anklam, and Stralsund, a series of murderous conflicts took place, Wilhelm himself directing the course of the campaign, and the British being entrenched for the most part behind a semi-circular line of earthworks stretching east and west, with Stralsund for base.

The three lines of railway, west to Lübeck and Hamburg, east to Stettin, and south to Berlin, were in the hands of the British, and after a day of fearful carnage in the neighbourhood of Neu Brandenburg, in which the German army was routed with a loss of 150,000 men, a successful rush was made for Stettin, which in the course of a night attack, fell into British hands.

The same night nearly the whole of Berlin was destroyed by fire, a catastrophe attributed to the action of the Socialists.

And over England came to Germany—raw levies, meagre Cockney-born lads, boors from the Downs, Lancashire bodkies, persons in kilts: not terrible to look at: terrible to meet as enemies.

Their chief characteristic is not that they are brave, and agile, and cool; but that by some unknown national quality of mind, they really contrive to do what they try to do. Their results always produce a certain effect of surprise.

Before these nimble invaders the *tapfere Krieger* of the Fatherland slowly receded.

From Thorn, that Metz of the East, from Königsberg, and Dantzic, and the great military depôts of the North-east, troops were drafted to repel this obstinate, rock-browed, small, unseasoned foe.

But the more the British poured their levies upon the German sea-board, and the greater the drafts by, Wilhelm upon the as yet inactive corps, and the nearer the possibility of a cull to be made upon the Teuton shopkeepers and burgers of the reserve, so the more Socialistic seemed to become the opinions of the German nation.

Socialism—with its absurdities—with its heavenly gospel of salvation for the world—had, for ultimate good, or ultimate ill, got into the blood of the nations during the latter half of the nineteenth century, to a far greater extent than anyone then supposed. Men who most hated the word, thought Socialism, and did not know it. It was bound to come out when the great moment for its birth arrived.

Wilhelm was walking above an abyss, and the ground beneath his feet was the thinnest parchment.

He had no sooner withdrawn a large portion of the Army of the Vistula, than Dantzic was sacked and taken by the Swedish fleet.

The most extraordinary phenomenon of this vast and complex war was the success of Sweden everywhere. Within three weeks, a division of her gallant little army, consisting of only three corps, had gained a permanent *pied à terre* as far south as Bromberg; she had wrought havoc with the north-eastern coast-defences of Germany; and she had turned West Prussia into a depopulated wilderness. Another division of her army, consisting of five corps, had in two great battles on the shores of Lake Ulea routed two Russian war-hosts, and then had pushed on to Helsingfors, which they captured from the land-side, and made their headquarters. Intoxicated by success, they turned their faces across the Gulf of Finland toward Petersburg.

The hands of Russia were full enough.

Immediately after the outbreak of war with Austria, she had concentrated as fast as her defective railway system would allow her, great masses of troops, consisting of the 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th Army Corps, in the direction of Lemberg. Behind these followed the more remote 13th, 16th, and 17th Corps.

Including the Corps d'Armée doing unsuccessful battle with the Swedes in Finland, by far the greater part of Russia's vast territorial power was now in the field, three additional army corps having advanced from Kara to the investment of Erzeroum, where a crushing defeat at the hands of a mixed army of Turks and British awaited them.

The eastern limb of the British Mediterranean fleet had steamed through the Bosphorus, conveying transports to Trebizonde, and then proceeded northwards, with the double object of a search for the Russian Black Sea Squadron, and the bombardment of Odessa and Sebastopol.

Austria had combined her forces into three armies: one in East Galicia, on the Dniester; another on the San with its back on Przenupl, the great bulwark of Middle Galicia; and the third on Cracow, the key of Western Galicia, on the Upper Vistula.

The Great White Tsar was pre-occupied. All round his sky were clouds and darkness. That mighty breadth of empire was already rocking to its fall.

The grey and green-coated soldiers of Russia were swarming round her borders, more on the defensive than the offensive. In the first fixed battle with the Austrians, General Gourko, the old Invincible, had been routed with such a horror of widespead massacre, that the brain of the aged general was unshinged. In a paroxysm of madness he shot himself.

And ever anew—after each orgy of blood—went forth the cry over Europe: *Mobil! Mobil!*

In a skirmish near Karatoya between two demi-regiments of Macedonians and Bulgarians, not a single man was left alive.

The fact was, that Europe was destroying herself. Everywhere, from Land's End to the Caucasus, the grin of a Spectre was perceived in the air—the Spectre of Hunger, of grim Scarcity, and raw-boned Want.

England had still America to supply her wants; but wants cannot be supplied save by the purchasing power of the party who wants. England's purchasing power had consisted in her commerce; and her commerce was near to death.

America, moreover, in this crisis, had no idea of small profits and quick returns. She had been thrown by the war into a state of financial collapse; and, with the blindness of selfishness, she raised her prices to prohibitive figures.

On paper, England remained rich enough. Her consols were taken up eagerly. The chief financiers and bankers of the world filled her war-chest. The security of by far the larger half of investments depended upon her success. As a matter of self-interest the Rothschilds, and Wall Street, and the kings of finance threw in their lot with her.

But the industry of the greater part of the world was at



In a paroxysm of madness he shot himself.

a standstill, and there is no real wealth which is not the direct offspring of industry.

Germany, France, Italy, and Russia opened their ports to all comers, adopting the free trade policy of England—but too late. That, of course, which they were unable to buy was not brought to them to be sold.

Russian wheat, by Royal command, ceased to be exported. But it would quite certainly have ceased to be exported without the command.

The fields grew rich and oozy with a human sap, the blood of millions. But the hand of industry was palsied to sow the seed.

Mobil, then, ye children of Europe! *Mobil* all ye can! But know that in the end it shall bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOVE WHICH FOO-CHEE BORE TO AH-LIN.

FOO-CHEE was No. 13 of the 3rd squad of the 1st company of the 2nd battalion of the 11th regiment of the 2nd brigade of the 1st division of the 17th Army Corps of the great army of China.

Every morning and every night he lifted up both his hands, and he blessed the name of Yen How, the illustrious, who by his might had changed the old flow and show of things. For why? Because Ah-lin was No. 15 of the same squad of the same company of the same battalion of the same regiment of the same brigade of the same division of the same Army Corps of the great army of China.

Every day, between four and a quarter to six o'clock in the afternoon, the company went through a certain drill on the plain to the south-east of the walls of Peking, half a mile from the walls, between Peking and Tunchow. The roll was called before drill commenced, and if any one were

absent, he, or she, was hanged publicly, by his heels, the next morning in Pekin. So Ah-lin had to be there; and Foo-chee saw Ah-lin, and blessed Yen How the illustrious.

Ah-lin was a girl of eighteen, very pretty, with the elongated face which the Chinese adore, and eyes so long, and narrow, and slanting. She was the daughter of a tiny silversmith, whose shop was on the fifth floor of a house in a gaudy Pekin main street.

Her father lived his life in a corner of the single room which was his shop and dwelling. His life was a dream, and his food rice-greens and opium. When he awoke from his paradises, he languidly took up a piece of silver, and looked at it, and put it down again.

Ah-lin's father and mother and herself lived happily upon fifteen *tiao*s, say twopence and the twelfth of a penny, per week. The father was exempt from service, because one of his legs was hopelessly incapable of walking. The mother served in a different company to that of Ah-lin.

But in spite of her poverty, Ah-lin had an elongated face, and peepy little bewitching eyes, and a pig-tail of incredible length. Her feet, of course, had not been cramped, and she walked with a fine free swing, slanting a wee bit backward, like the true Northerner that she was. Even a statue might move to worship her.

"Foo-chee," said Ni-ching-tang, who was the father of Foo-chee, "take your eyes from Ah-lin, my son. Leave Ah-lin be. She is loved by Sin-wan, and Sin-wan is among the honourable ones in the days which are."

Ni-ching-tang knew what he was saying; for he was a very subordinate cook in the multitudinous kitchen of Yen How; and Sin-wan was a warder in the Imperial Prisons. Ni-ching-tang and Sin-wan were very good nodding acquaintances, as we should say.

That Sin-wan loved Ah-lin there could be no doubt. He had more than once risked his neck in leaving the Imperial precincts at unlawful hours to make signalling gestures in the street before the fifth-floor room of Ah-lin's parents.

But Sin-wan was of middle age, and unduly stout. His neck was thick and hard, and seemed made for hanging. And his countenance was as hideous as Rin-foi's, the chief of the devils, as it stands carved out in the ebon idols.

Moreover, Sin-wan was greatly addicted to secret orgies on the fiery spirit *samshu*, and the impress of these brutalising excesses was left on his already brutal face.

Ah-lin's eyes, though narrow, could see much; and in her secret meditations in the darkness of the room at night, she would think that Foo-chee was nice to look at, and Sin-wan was not.

Foo-chee was a young man of twenty, and a seller of Tibet incense-sticks in the next street to that in which Ah-lin lived. And these two units, among the tens of thousands of human beings that swarmed and sweltered round them, felt within them the stirrings of that force which made the world.

Ah-lin had noted the following eye of Foo-chee often, long before the strange drilling commenced; and when she found herself almost next to him in the 3rd squad, she had a presentiment, and a tremor. It was the doing of the upper gods.

"Ah-lin," said Ah-lin's mother, Nan-lin, "turn away your eyes from the eyes that turn to you. Foo-chee is nice to look at, but Sin-wan is among the honourable ones in the days that are. A child should love her father and her mother above herself, and do all for them."

But it was the doing of the upper gods, what happened. Ah-lin was near to Foo-chee every day in the new drill; and the drilling straightened Foo-chee's back, so that his backward slant as he walked was increased, till a woman would have died for him.

But Sin-wan, one night, beckoned to Nan-lin from the street, and Nan-lin sent down Ah-lin, and Sin-wan took Ah-lin by the hand, and said:

"Ah-lin is well formed, both in face and figure. Therefore I, Sin-wan, will marry with Ah-lin."

At this directness Ah-lin hung her head. It was not difficult to perceive the sequence of cause and effect in this matter—and she was afraid of Sin-wan.

"Do you say yes, Ah-lin?" said Sin-wan. "If you say yes, I will take you now to a meal in Hing-Chang-Li's eating-house, with fresh tea to drink."

"I would say yes," replied Ah-lin, "but my father and mother—to whom all honour—do not wish me to marry now."

"That is a lie, Ah-lin. Your father and mother wish you to marry. And you wish to marry, too. But you do not wish to marry with me. You wish to marry with Foo-chee."

"Foo-chee?"—she started—"Where did you hear the name of Foo-chee?"

"Your mother told me his name, Ah-lin."

"It is strange. I know no one with such a name."

"It is a lie, Ah-lin. His name is written in green and red picture-letters over the booth where he sells incense-sticks. I have seen it, and I have seen him."

"And what do you say is his name?"

"Foo-chee."

"Well, it may be, Sin-wan. I know nothing of the matter."

"Foo-chee shall die, Ah-lin, if you do not marry with me."

"Oh! what for? Whom has Foo-chee hurt? He sells his incense-sticks, and hurts no one!"

"Now I have made you say that you wish to marry with him. For you do not wish me to kill him, Ah-lin."

"Kill him, if you wish."

"I will kill him."

"But why so?"

"Because you will not marry with me."

"I did not say I will not marry with you, Sin-wan."

"Then you will?"

"I must."

"When, Ah-lin?"

"When the new drilling is no more."

"Oh, that may be never. No. It shall be while this moon is big."

"I cannot, Sin-wan—I cannot."

"Why not, Ah-lin?"

"It is my father and mother,—to whom all—"

"It is that dog's gall, Foo-chee! Foo-chee shall die, Ah-lin."

"Oh, me! I am not feeling happy, Sin-wan!"

"No, nor am I feeling happy, till you say that it shall be this moon! Nor shall Foo-chee feel happy, when my knife is rankling in his liver! Say it, Ah-lin!"

"I say it, Sin-wan."

"While the moon is big?"

"Yes, Sin-wan."

"Then I will go. And I will come again to-morrow night at this hour."

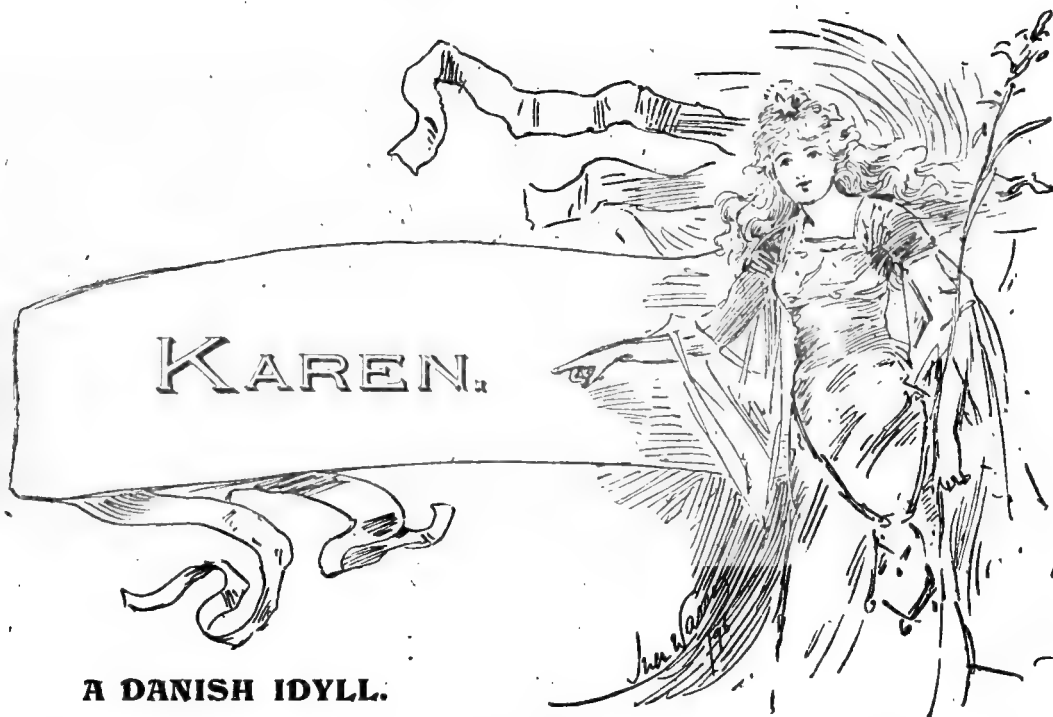
"Did you not say that you would take me to the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li for a meal, with fresh tea?"

"I cannot to-night, for I have no time, since I must return now to the Imperial Prison. But to-morrow night—or the night after—you shall feed at the eating-house of Hing-Chang-Li."

So Sin-wan turned abruptly on his heels, and walked away on them. And when he arrived at the portals of the Imperial City, after traversing a vast complexity of streets, he was already late, and his bulging neck was in danger.

(To be continued.)

Look out for Next Week's **SHORT STORIES**. It will be the Easter Number, and a Series of **Stock Exchange Stories** will begin.



A DANISH IDYLL.

THERE was once upon a time in Kraruper Inn a maiden named Karen. She attended to the serving of the guests herself, for the landlady lived among her pots and pans in the kitchen. And many people came to Kraruper Inn—neighbours who collected there when the autumn evenings began to darken, and sat in the warm room, and drank unlimited quantities of coffee punch. Travellers and wanderers, too, who came in blue with cold, stamping their feet and calling for something hot, that would enable them to reach the next station.

Karen went about silently, without haste, serving each in his turn. She was small and delicate, only a child, earnest and reserved, and the young fellows did not notice her. But she was very dear to the older customers, to whom a visit to the Inn was an event of importance. She prepared their coffee quickly, and served it seven times hot.

When she moved about among the guests with her waiter, the burly, coarsely-dressed men stood aside and made way for her, and every one looked admiringly after her. Karen had great, grey eyes that took in everything, and seemed to look far, far away, and her eyebrows were arched in surprise and wonder. Strangers thought she did not understand their orders; but Karen heard all, and made never a mistake. She had a way of her own, whether she gazed into the distance, or listened, or waited, or dreamt.

Some one stood near the window, and looking at the clock said: "The post is early to-night." The mail coach rattled over the pavement, the doors of the inn were thrown open and the wind blew the smoke from the stove.

Karen entered from the kitchen just as the conductor stepped into the door and greeted the company with a hearty "Good evening!"

He was a tall, handsome man, with dark eyes; a crisp brown beard framed his face, and curly brown hair covered his small head. His long, heavy mantle of

beautiful red Danish cloth was trimmed with black fur and hung from his shoulders. The entire light of the two dim paraffin lamps that were suspended from the wall over the table centred itself on this spot of glorious crimson, as if it loved it and left all the grey and black of the room to grow still greyer and blacker. And the tall figure—with the fine, dark, curly head, and the long folds of the crimson cloak—shone like a very marvel of splendour and colour.

The hostess was in the deepest despair. Everything had gone wrong in her kitchen. She had lost her spectacles, and boundless confusion filled the inn. The travellers pounded the table with the bell loudly; the fish pedlars laughed until they were half dead over the hares spread before them; the bewildered farmer tapped the landlady on the shoulder with the candlestick and puffed himself out like a turkey cock.

And amid all this maddening confusion Karen had disappeared. The postillion Anders sat on the driver's seat; the stable boy stood ready to open the door; the travellers in the mail coach were impatient, and so were the horses, although they had nothing pleasant to look forward to, and the wind rattled and whistled through the stable.

At last the conductor, for whom they were waiting, came out. He carried his mantle over his arm as he stepped into the coach, and excused his delay with a few curt words. He laughed to himself as he drew his cloak about him and took his seat. The door was closed, the mail coach rolled on.

Anders let the horses trot gently, now there was no more need to haste. From time to time he glanced slyly at the conductor, who still laughed to himself, while the wind ruffled his hair. The postillion laughed, too. He suspected something. The wind followed the coach to a turn in the road, then threw itself again over the plain and sighed mysteriously through the heather bushes.

When Karen returned to the inn parlour there was a glimmer of a smile on her lip, and once when she raised her eyes their light was dazzling. When she felt the men's eyes following her, she went into the next room where the travellers sat, pretending that she wanted some teaspoons from the cupboard.

"Did you notice the conductor?" asked one of them.

"No; not till he went out. He left very quickly," answered the other with his mouth full of roast-hare.

"A very handsome fellow. I attended his wedding."

"So—is he married?"

"Yes, indeed; his wife is the daughter of the landlord at Ulstrup, and I got there the night of the wedding. That was a jolly time, I assure you. They have two children, I believe."

Karen dropped the teaspoons and went out. She heard nothing that was called after her from the inn. She went across the court to her room and began mechanically to tidy it up. Her eyes stared into the darkness. She pressed her hands to her head, to her breast, she groaned. She could comprehend nothing—nothing!

She heard the landlady's complaining voice: "Karen, dear Karen!" it called. She ran out across the court, behind the inn, across the moor.

The winding strip of grass glimmered in the half

light as if it were a path, but it was no path. No one dared to follow it, for it led abruptly to the brink of the great pond. The hare quickened his steps. He heard a rustling. He gave long jumps as if he were mad to escape; not knowing what he feared he fled over the plain.

The fox stretched out his sharp nose and stared in surprise at the hare. He had heard nothing! According to the instincts of his kind he had crouched there in the hollow—he was conscious of no terror. He could not understand the action of the hare. He stood long with outstretched head and slinking body. His bushy tail was hidden by the heather bushes, and he began to wonder if foxes were getting duller or hares wiser.

But when the first wind had run its long course it turned into a north wind, and then into an east wind, and then into the south wind, and at last came back over the sea as the west wind again, threw itself upon the dunes and long, mysterious sighs moaned through the heather bushes.

But there were wanting in Kiaruper Inn two wondering grey eyes, a little blue woollen gown that had grown too small, and the hostess complained more than ever. She could not understand it at all. No one could understand it, save the postillion Anders, and one other.

ALEXANDER KILLAM.

THE TALKING PICTURE.

It was quite remarkable to hear a picture talking, but my famous oil painting, "Sylla, the Queen of the Sea," certainly was speaking.

"Do you really think me beautiful?" she asked again, and I answered her this time, "Yes!"

That was a rational question and a rational answer, for she had been in the last exhibition of the Royal Academy, and I had been offered an extravagant sum for her.

"Why do you think me beautiful?" she asked. And as she spoke she drew one foot out of the water, and to my surprise, a few drops fell on the desk, wetting my papers and a half burnt cigar lying on the tray.

Had the would-be purchaser known how realistic the water in my picture was, he would undoubtedly have offered me a fabulous price for it.

"Why do I think you beautiful?" I said; "why, because I made you, of course."

"Yes," she answered, "I owe my existence to you." She put a beautiful foot on my desk and stepped completely out of the frame, then jumped lightly to the floor.

"Why did you dress me in this stuff?" she asked petulantly, pulling at the seaweed that partly adorned her figure, and leaning so closely over my shoulder that I seemed to feel how damp she was, and smelt what might be termed the salty freshness of the ocean.

"Seaweed becomes you," I answered, "but if you would like something different, I'll adorn you in a new dress when you get back into the frame."

It occurred to me at this stage of the interview that my wife, who was in the library, poring over a volume of Macaulay, might at any moment enter.

"I don't intend going back to the frame," Sylla said, as she pressed a damp kiss on my cheek. "I'm going to stay here with you."

The kiss ignited the powder of my passion, so to speak, and I instantly wished my wife in the scene where Macaulay's lays are laid.

Sylla wound a piece of seaweed round my right hand. "Do you remember," she murmured, "how you wondered whether you would make my eyes blue or green? Aren't you glad you made them blue, now?"

I looked into her eyes as she finished speaking, and my soul went to them.

"Now kiss me!" she commanded, like a cherub giving orders, and I did so.

Sylla commenced to feel what can only be termed kittenish, and slipped a bit of seaweed down my neck. "I don't think your wife at all pretty," she said.

"Neither do I," I answered recklessly, though my wife was the belle of the town she came from, but I could not see now where her beauty came in.

"I have seen you look at me for hours and hours," she went on, "long after you finished me. What made you do that?"

"I do that with lots of my pictures," I said; "it's a habit of mine; and, besides, I made you such a beautiful siren."

"Oh! but I'm not a siren," she said, "because sirens have no feelings, and I have!" In proof of which she burst out crying. "Look!" she exclaimed, "I am weeping pearls!" and, true enough, she was, for in an instant I was on my hands and knees picking them up.

"How many are there?" she asked. She was smiling now, and her eyes shone brighter for having wept.

I counted them over, greedily, I confess. "Forty-two!" Sorrow's gems indeed! Often had I seen my wife weep, but who ever thought of counting tears before?

"Let those be a marriage dowry," Sylla said, pointing to the pearls glistening in my outstretched hand, "for of course we are going to be married!"

Oh! of course! But there was my wife in the library—I would tell Sylla, and I told her.

The Queen of the Sea laughed. Such a laugh! The music caused by a southern wind caressing the strings of an Æolian harp alone may be compared with it.

"What business is it of your wife's?" Her voice for the first time sounded sharp, but it became soft in an instant. "You have made me to love! I know your wife has not such pretty arms as I have, nor such dainty hands. Your wife has not such soft cheeks,"—her own were against mine as she spoke—"nor such hair,"—her tresses caressed my neck as she trilled in my ears—"nor such love!"

"Where shall we get married?" I queried, with a vague remembrance of having asked the question before—somewhere.

"Why, down at the bottom of the sea," laughed Sylla. "You ought to know, you painted it."

I looked at my painting; it looked rather blank without Sylla. It must have been lonely for her, I reflected, in the water all by herself. No wonder she wanted company.

"I'd like to say good-bye to my wife," I confessed to Sylla; "she's been a true little woman and a good wife." Something like tears came to my eyes—though they were not pearls—and I felt like relenting.

Sylla's arms were round my neck the next moment. "Don't ever speak of your wife again! You know she compares with me about as well as a daisy does with a rose! Just leave the pearls on your desk for her. You know if you want any more you've only got to make me feel unhappy, and I'll give them to you. Now follow me!"

She was on the desk and had one foot in the picture when I heard a tap at the door. It was my wife rapping. How unfortunate! In another quarter of a minute I would have been at the bottom of the sea! I looked into Sylla's blue eyes for directions; she pointed to the water, and, clasping my hand, commenced to pull me towards her.

I got a sudden notion that I didn't wish to go with Sylla to the bottom of the sea at all, and pulled the other way. She grew furious and shook me violently, while the sea grew blacker and blacker. I felt I was giving way, when my head was suddenly jerked upward, and I opened my eyes.

My wife, who had aroused me, had a cup in her hands. "The doctor said the next time you went to sleep suddenly in your study you should take this," she said, handing me the cup.

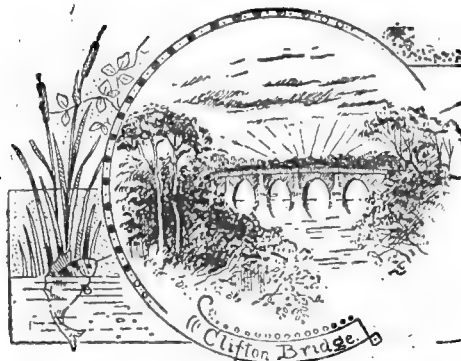
I had a better prescription than the doctor's. I sold my picture to the man who had so long begged to be its purchaser.

And I often wonder whether the Queen of the Sea has paid him a visit, or whether she intends doing so.

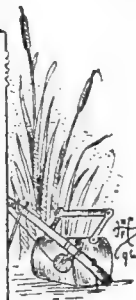
But then—he's a bachelor.

ARTHUR LAMB.





LITTLE JAN.



ONE night a man stopped me to ask for money to buy bread. There was such an earnestness in his voice and gestures that I questioned him. He was a man of fifty, ragged and pinched, and the story he told of looking for work in vain for weeks and weeks was no doubt true.

"The bread is not for me, but for little Jan," he explained when he saw that I was interested.

"And who is little Jan?"

"My little gal, sir—my gal Jan—the only one of the family left me. Wife dead—boy dead—only little Jan left, and she's sick and hungry. Poor dear!"

"And you and your daughter live alone, eh?"

"All alone—Jan and me. It's right down there, second turning on the right, and up six flights of stairs. Don't s'pose you'd care to come and see her, would you? It's hard climbing, but you'd see what poverty can do for a man when you get to the top of the house. Poor Jan—poor little thing! It's hard to be ill and without food or medicine."

I took him to a grocer's, and we got bread and fruits and jellies and other things, and at every order he lifted up his hands and exclaimed:

"Good Lord, but to think of it! All this for dear little Jan—poor sick Jan! Why, sir, when she sees all these things she'll think Heaven has come down to her!"

It was a tenement of narrow passages and steep stairs and small rooms. There was the odour of sewer gas—the noisome smell of poverty whenever you find it. You felt the dampness, and you expected the faces peering at you to reflect the degradation of the place.

"You won't fail me, sir," whispered the man as we stood in the dimly-lighted doorway through which poverty had passed and repassed thousands of times.

"What do you mean?"

"You'll go up with me and see Jan and help me tell her all about it—poor gal!"

"Yes, I'll go up."

"And praise her, sir," he whispered as he put a hand on my arm, "and tell her she'll get well and better times will come. You'll find her sick and hungry, but you'll see a dear good gal, who'd die before she'd make a complaint."

At the third flight, where we halted for breath, he touched me again as if to make sure that I hadn't vanished, and whispered in my ear:

"Tell her that I'll soon find work, and things will go all right again. She's got a clean frock laid away in the chest, and perhaps you'll come some day and take her to the park. She knows how I love her, but you can say a word or two about that if you will. Poor little Jan—poor little gal!"

At his door, on the fourth floor, we waited for a moment, and he gripped my arm and put his mouth close to my ear to whisper:

"She's waiting for me to come home with a stale loaf, and here we've got all that a rich man would want for his dinner. She'll laugh and cry, and want to kiss you, and please don't mind it! Stand here in the door till I light the bit of candle."

He went in on tip-toe and struck a match and lighted the piece of candle standing in a broken cup on the table. Then he beckoned to me, and as I softly entered he picked up the light and said:

"Little Jan is asleep! Ain't she a brave gal not to cry at the darkness when left alone? Come over, and we'll wake her up and tell her the good news."

We went over to the bed of rags, and in the dim light of the candle I saw a skeleton form with ghostly face lying on the old pieces of quilt and carpet. Hands which had wasted away to mere claws were folded across the child's breast, and her sunken eyes were tightly closed.

"Jan! Jan!" whispered the father as he bent over her.

She made no move in response.

"Poor Jan—poor little gal! She is ill and hungry and does not hear me. Jan, father is home—open your eyes!"

There was not the slightest movement from the wasted form on the bed, and the man turned to me and said:

"Poor Jan—how sound she sleeps!"

"Jan is asleep in death," I answered.

"What! Jan dead—Jan dead here in the darkness and alone!" he almost shouted as he laid a hand on her head.

"Even so. See! She passed away without a struggle. Your Jan will never know sickness and hunger again."

It was so. Her body was growing cold to the touch. Lying there on that bed of rags, with the darkness shutting her in and no human being within call, she had welcomed the coming of death with a smile, and sang in the gladness of her heart as the angels bore her through the valley of the shadow to the eternal sunshine beyond.

"And she is dead—Jan is dead!" whispered the father.

"Yes, poor child!"

He sat down on a chair with his face to the wall, and rocked his body to and fro and moaned and wept. So I left him and stole quietly down the dark and narrow stairs and out into the night. It were better thus, for what could I say to comfort him?

ASHBY. REES.



A propos of the notice which appeared in last week's S.S., I now publish a letter from Mr. John Kirk, which gives full particulars regarding the Fund in the twenty-five centres which are included this year.

DEAR MR. PEARSON.—The success and development of the FRESH AIR FUND must be very gratifying to you and to your sympathetic readers. It says much also for the initial scheme projected six years ago, that it has required little or no alterations in its extension throughout the country.

We had in our minds, if you remember, primarily, the little East-enders of London. Now the Fund has become firmly rooted in most of the great cities of the United Kingdom.

Once again it has been my privilege to share with your good secretary, Mr. Kessell, in visiting or communicating with the different committees and friends responsible for the administration of the FRESH AIR FUND in the several localities.

We have found everywhere an increasing eagerness to share in the Fund, and a growing appreciation of its benefits. Further we have been charged with grateful expressions of thanks to yourself, and your generous-minded contributors.

Acting on your authority, we have provisionally promised the numbers hereunder stated for the ensuing summer. Opposite each town is given the names of the secretaries or correspondents representing the various committees.

Assuredly your earnest intentions on behalf of the poorer little children of our great towns will be as heartily seconded by your readers as in past years.

This is the sincere wish of the voluntary workers in London and elsewhere, who will be only too glad, one and all, to co-operate with you for another season in making the youngsters supremely happy by at least one day's fresh air in the country.

Yours faithfully,

Here is a list of the 25 towns from which the children will be sent during the coming season :

ABERDEEN.—2,000 Children.

A. J. McConnochie, C.A., Sec. Children's Fresh Air Fortnight, 74 Union Street, Aberdeen.

BIRMINGHAM.—5,000 Children.

George Shipway, Sunday School Union, 2 Temperance Institute, Corporation Street.

BELFAST.—4,000 Children.

W. J. W. Roome, Whitehall Buildings, Ann Street.

BLACKBURN.—2,000 Children.

J. T. Walkden, Ragged School, Victoria Court, Ainsworth Street.

BRISTOL.—2,500 Children.

George Clayton, 59 Cromwell Road.

BRADFORD.—2,000 Children.

Thos. Newbould, Cinderella Club, 8 Rand Street.

BOLTON.—2,000 Children.

J. Popplewell, 9 Pool Street.

CARDIFF.—2,000 Children.

G. Percy Thomas, 72 Claude Road.

DUBLIN.—2,500 Children.

A. J. Nicholls, L.L.B., The Castle, Dublin.

DUNDEE.—2,000 Children.

R. C. Campbell, Free Breakfast Mission, 12 Victoria Chambers.

EDINBURGH.—2,000 Children.

Thos. Davidson, 18 Granville Terrace.

GATESHEAD.—2,000 Children.

J. H. Watson, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 140 Sidney Grove.

GLASGOW.—5,000 Children.

A. McCracken, 40 St. Vincent Place.

HULL.—2,000 Children.

J. B. Anderson, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 3 Junction Place, Queen's Dockside.

LEEDS.—3,000 Children.

John W. Hives, 6 Lyddon Terrace.

LEICESTER.—2,000 Children.

H. Lawrence, Ragged School Mission, Lynton, St. James's Road.

LIVERPOOL.—5,000 Children.

F. W. Cropper, Ragged School Union, 3 Harkins Hey.

LONDON.—40,000 Children.

John Kirk, Ragged School Union, 37 Norfolk Street, Strand.

MANCHESTER.—5,000 Children.

W. E. Rowcliffe, 30 Cross Street, and J. P. Reid, Hon Sec. Ragged School Union.

NOTTINGHAM.—2,000 Children.

F. W. Dobson, Queen's Road.

NEWCASTLE.—2,000 Children.

J. H. Watson, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 140 Sidney Grove.

OLDHAM.—2,000 Children.

R. Peacock, Poor Children's Holiday Fund, Chief Constable's Office.

PORTSMOUTH.—2,000 Children.

B. Tilly, Lonsdale, Cottage Grove, Southsea (Ragged School).

SHEFFIELD.—3,000 Children.

W. H. Totterdill, Poor Children's Holiday Association, 81 Douglas Road.

SUNDERLAND.—2,000 Children.

Mr. Alderman Bruce (Mayor), 64 Nile Street.

Serial Story.

THE RIVAL QUEENS

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

AMAURY MONTRUEL, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albrecht, the King's page, takes Eve, alias Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone.

CHAPTER VII.

CAPTAIN CADOCU BARS THE WAY.

WHILE Madame Agnes and Amaury Montruel were in the cathedral, noise and turmoil continued to reign outside. As the evening advanced the masons prepared to leave work, the stall-keepers and itinerant vendors packed up their goods, and the beggars crept off one by one either to haunt the dark alleys through the night in search of plunder, or to sleep in the fetid dens they called home.

Poor Eric returned to his lodgings with a heavy heart, full of anxiety for his sister, of whom he had seen and heard nothing since she had left him early that morning.

When Agnes de Méranie had regained her negligent escort (for, with the exception of Montruel, none of them had troubled themselves to come to her assistance in the crowd) they all started on their way back to the Louvre, but as they were riding across the top of the Rue de la Calandre, the Duke of Burgundy, who headed the *cortège*, found his way barred by a troop of armed men, who were shouting snatches of drinking-songs and waving their unlighted torches in the air.

"Give place, varlets!" cried the Duke, with his hand on his sword.

"Oh, oh!" said a jovial voice. "Here is one of my noble companions of the night before last! Welcome, my lord Duke, do you not recognise your fellow-guest?"

"Let us pass, or we'll ride you down!" and the Duke drove the spurs into his horse's sides. The next moment he felt the beast stagger and fall beneath him. It had been stabbed in the withers, and died instantaneously.

"I don't like killing good horses," said the same voice

out of the growing darkness, "but I had not the conscience to kill you, my lord, for such an idle threat."

Burgundy was on the ground, struggling vainly to disengage himself from the stirrups and trappings of his dead steed, but he shouted furiously:

"Charge those villains and cut them down to a man!"

A derisive laugh from the festive band greeted these wild words, but not a man moved to obey the Duke's command, for the whisper had gone round that seemingly gallant train:

"The Free-lances! The Free-lances!"

Montruel pressed close to Agnes and whispered:

"This man must be won at any cost. He is the Captain of the Free-lances. All the others are useless without him!"

The leader of the troop laughed louder than all the rest, but he was not malicious, for he bent down and gave the unlucky Duke a helping hand to rise, saying as he did so:

"Out! You are heavy, my lord Duke, and laughing makes me weak! So you wanted to cut me to pieces? Is that the way you pay your debts?"

"It's that scoundrel Cadocu!" cried one of the nobles. "And he's drunk to boot!"

In spite of their brave display, these haughty barons made no attempt to force a passage, and it was well they did not do so, for fresh contingents had emerged from the neighbouring taverns, and the air resounded with the clatter of swords and the clinking of spurs.

"How much would it take to buy this man?" asked Agnes, whose mind was running more on personal schemes than the present danger.

Montruel told her of the sum promised to Cadocu by the Legate, and that the King had doubled it.

"What? the King offered him two hundred thousand crowns?" she said angrily. "But that is *our* money; what is to become of *me* if the finances are squandered in this mad fashion?"

The Captain of the Free-lances now ordered the torches to be lighted, and his orders, unlike those of Burgundy, were obeyed immediately. The flaring, lurid light illumined a strange scene. There in the cross-roads stood that glittering throng of courtiers and nobles, each with a frown on his brow and an impotent oath in his heart, making a pretence of protecting fine ladies pale with fright, all held at bay by a handful of men, whose coarse, rugged features were mostly relaxed by a half-drunken smile.

Cadocu advanced holding a torch in his hand.

"Come, my lords, you've not forgotten our meeting the

other night, and if my friend Jean de Nesle is here, I'm sure he will have a word for his comrade Antoine."

"Good evening, friend Antoine!" said Jean de Nesle promptly; "you have been supping freely I note, so I'm sure you will not have the heart to stop us any longer from doing likewise."

"If ever I catch you near Dijon, my man, you shall pay for this night's work!" hissed the Duke of Burgundy through his white, trembling lips.

"All right, my lord Duke; I'm glad to hear you talk of paying, for there is that little matter of thirty thousand crowns which the King taxed you with on my behalf, and, moreover, you owe me humble thanks for not having made myself Duke of Burgundy that night as I might have done, and then what would you have been to-day, eh?"

Agnes de Méranie was still counting the cost of Antoine Cadocu.

"If I sold all my castles and my jewels, I could not raise enough to buy this man," she said at last petulantly.

"I will help you, my Queen," said Montruel, and then he enumerated the various sources from which he could draw funds to assist her, but she barely heard him. She was thinking of another way to buy this costly adherent.

"My lord," she broke in suddenly, "I must see this man!"

"You, madame—?" he stammered.

"Yes, I. And I must see him to-night, at your house!"

"But, madame, it is unheard of—it is—still my presence will lessen the danger."

"And I must see him alone!" she added imperiously.

Montruel made no answer, he knew her mood too well to oppose it.

"Come along, my boys," cried Cadocu. "I've still a few coins in my purse, and the tavern keeper of St. Landry knows me well enough. I will give you credit, my lord Duke, till to-morrow, and Jean de Nesle shall go to his supper! Pass on, my good sirs, unless you will follow me to François Gauthier's and quaff a cup of good wine to your fair ladies' health?"

"Another time, friend Antoine," said Jean de Nesle, who was the only one who could speak civilly to this daring knave.

Cadocu jumped up on to a mile-stone at the corner of the street and gave an imperious sign to his men, who promptly drew up in single file in front of the houses, so that, save for the mocking jeers of the Free-lances, they might have been placed there as a guard of honour to the cavalcade.

"Oh, oh!" cried the Captain as he spied the ladies in the train, "the noble Duke did not tell us this!"

He was a fine, stalwart fellow, with a cheery, open countenance, and every woman's eye rested on him as they passed.

"Jean de Nesle," he called out, "is Madame Agnes among this fair bevy?"

Jean de Nesle was out of hearing, but Maître Samson, who believed in making powerful friends whenever he could, pointed her out to Cadocu, who rose on tiptoes to see her better.

"Umph! She's with that black-guard Montruel," he muttered. "I've heard something of that affair! They

told me she was like that poor girl Agnes the Fair, whom that cur had put out of the way; and, *pardieu*, they spoke the truth—they're as like as two peas!"

At this moment Agnes de Méranie passed in front of him. She had heard his question, and her face was flushed—not in anger, but with pleasure at the promise of success afforded to her plans by his curiosity. She was bent on saving the two hundred thousand crowns, so she gave him a most radiant smile and a gracious little inclination of the head.

"Peste," he said to himself, for he was susceptible to feminine charms, "my little Agnes herself couldn't smile sweeter than that."

While he was reflecting on her attractions and condescension, she was whispering her imperative commands to Montruel, who fell back, and allowed the procession to go on without him.

"Now, mates, let us go and spend the night right merrily! Thank goodness, we've drunk enough to make that villain Gauthier's wine taste like nectar! *En route!*"

The men needed no second bidding, and soon the Captain was left, as he thought, alone in the deserted street, when he felt a hand on his arm. He turned round to find Amaury Montruel at his elbow.

"You here?" he said shortly. "*Diable*, you'd better go elsewhere, I can tell you! I was fond of that poor girl you had murdered yesterday, and I hate gentlemen rogues who



Found his way barred by a troop of armed men.

pay poor men to do their dirty work while they themselves won't run the risk of fair fight."

"It doesn't matter in the least to me what you like or hate, Maître Antoine," replied Montruel coolly, for, like most of his contemporaries, he was not wanting in physical courage. "I am here to deliver a message to you. Will you listen to it?"

"And you'd give the eyes out of your head if I'd say no! You'd like to go back and say, 'I've done my part, but he won't listen.' But I'll hear what you've got to say in the tavern yonder, not here in the street, and you can drink a cup of wine on your own account if you like, but, by the Foul Fiend, I'll not stain my lips by drinking with such as you!"

"That is, as well; for Amaury Montruel would never stoop to touch glasses with Antoine Cadocu."

The Captain of the Free-lances started and laid his hand on his sword, but his companion merely shrugged his shoulders and faced him with folded arms.

"*Pardieu!* I'm playing the part of the Duke of Burgundy, for I touch the hilt and don't draw sword! But follow me, my lord Montruel, and when I've heard your message we can discuss other things."

The Free-lances had already begun their revels, and a noise that would have done justice to Pandemonium greeted the arrival of their chief and his unwilling guest.

The tavern of St. Landry was a large, low room, which was approached by descending several steps cut in the soft earth and kept in their place by some mouldy pieces of wood.

There was a torch fixed in the middle of the cellar, for it was little else, and a small boy was deputed to shake it from time to time when it burnt low, while a few rush-lights dotted about on the tables cast their flickering beams across the vault-like chamber, whose farther recesses concealed heaps of dirt and refuse both animate and inanimate. As soon as the well-known figure of the chief appeared at the top of the steps, a number of girls rushed towards him and gave him a boisterous welcome. One sweet voice dominated the rest, and its owner, a girl of remarkable beauty, was the first to reach Cadocu and throw her arms round his neck.

"Good evening, Catherine, my beauty!" he said affectionately.

"Are you going to dance and sing now?" she asked eagerly.

"Not just yet, my lass; we must drink a little first, for I've got to talk business with this gentleman here, so, my dears, you must be quiet for a little while."

The wild troop dispersed into the other parts of the building, and though it could not be called quiet, still there was less noise than when first they had entered.

François Gauthier, the master of this unruly establish-

ment, was a powerfully built, red-faced man between fifty and sixty.

He nodded to Cadocu and asked what wine he should bring.

"A flagon for me," said Antoine.

"Shall I bring two goblets?"

"One is enough," replied Montruel curtly.

"He doesn't drink much, then," grumbled the host to himself, then turning to Cadocu, he added meaningly:

"Look here, friend Antoine, the King has encouraged all sorts of lazy fellows and spies in the city, and everyone knows there are swarms of them about."

Montruel sat with his head erect, humming a drinking song to himself, and seeming to take no heed of the fellow's insolence.

"Never mind, François, you go and get my wine and leave this gentleman to manage his own affairs. Upon my soul, he was not far wrong either, my lord," he added when the host had left them. "However, I think a little less badly of you than I did, for I noticed you turned pale when you came into my den."

"If I did so it was because my nose is not used to such foul air and filthy smells. But let us get through our business as quickly as possible."

"If the King has chosen him, he must be worth something," thought Cadocu. "Ah! here comes the wine! Now I'm at your service, my lord."



"Holla, you scoundrels! do you want all your heads breaking?"

CHAPTER VIII.

MADAME AGNES RECEIVES AN INVITATION.

MONTRUEL was sitting with both his elbows on the table, and if he did not show fear, he certainly betrayed unmistakeable signs of embarrassment; in fact, he seemed quite at a loss how to begin his unpleasant task, but at last he jerked out:

"I have come to you from the Queen."

"Which Queen?"

"I speak of Madame Agnes, of course!"

"Oh, indeed! So you call her the Queen, do you? Well, the Council will set all that straight for us. I half suspected that you came from Madame Agnes. What does she want with me?"

"She wants to see you."

"Ah, she shows her good taste. I was just thinking I should like to see her myself."

Montruel's face became livid, and he drove his nails into the palms of his hands to prevent himself from doing violence to this man. The one ruling passion of his life was love for Agnes de Méranie. Anything that touched her cut him to the quick, and there was a contemptuous ring in Cadocu's voice that made his blood boil.

"Then it will not be difficult to arrange," he said in a hard, constrained tone.

"Probably not. You made a fool of yourself over the other Agnes because she was like Madame de Méranie, so

you can understand that I have a fancy to see the Queen, as you call her, because she's like the poor dead girl I was fond of."

The noise at the other end of the room had become deafening, men were shouting, women shrieking, metal drinking cups were being flung upon the floor as soon as emptied, while ominous groans came from several who would gladly have quitted the scene if anyone could have been found to carry them.

"Hola, you scoundrels! do you all want your heads breaking? I told you to be quiet for a time, and the time's not up yet!" shouted Cadocu in his stentorian voice, enforced by the banging of his empty flagon on the table.

This little diversion gave Montruel time to recover from the last nasty remark, so he went on coldly:

"As the Queen wishes to see you, and you wish to see her, my task is done. She awaits you now at my house."

"At your house? *Parbleu!* then King Philip has not such sharp eyes as men give him credit for!" said Cadocu jeeringly.

"Answer me! Will you come?"

The Captain of the Free-lances bent forward and whispered a few words into Montruel's ear, which must have been of unparalleled insolence, for he started to his feet as if he had been stung, and strode towards the door without sign or sound.

Cadocu went off into a roar of laughter, and, holding his sides, rocked to and fro on his chair.

"I've hit him hard this time!" he chuckled. "I just touched his soft spot, the mean cur! Stop, my lord," he called to Montruel. "You've not given me your answer; but if you think better of it, you'll find me here till day-break, getting more drunk every hour."

No answer was vouchsafed to him, so he turned to the girls, saying:

"Now, my beauties, the fun begins! You can dance, sing, drink, shout, fight, or make love if you like, so long as you're jolly. Here, Catherine, my sweetheart, fetch me another cup of wine."

Agnes de Méranie, the chosen wife of Philip Augustus, King of France, was alone in the house of Amaury Montruel, sitting in the very room where he had given audience to La Fontanelle, and where Agnes the Fair had betrayed the fatal knowledge that had proved her own undoing.

She had been waiting some time for Amaury's return, and her mobile features wore an expression of feverish impatience.

"What would the King say?" she murmured. "He is waiting for me, looking for me, and—perhaps already suspecting me!"

She shuddered at this last thought, but it was only for a second, and she went on with a complacent smile:

"What matter if he did? I could throw dust in his eyes easily enough! And even if he were jealous, he would only love me the more."

She was lying back in Amaury's favourite chair, with every nerve strained to catch the first sound of approaching footsteps. Her dark eyes shone dangerously in the dim lamp-light, and the strong, fierce passions, which she generally contrived to conceal under a mask of playful coquetry, were now having full play in face and figure. She was like a young lioness watching for her prey.

The church clocks struck nine. Her restlessness increased.

"He has not come yet, and the *Porte St. Honoré* will be closed. How shall I get back into the Louvre, or explain my absence? The fool! what can he be doing?"

She began to walk about the room, working her fingers convulsively, and muttering imprecations upon her tardy messenger. Suddenly she stopped, and, thinking someone was coming, she pushed aside a heavy curtain and entered a small, luxuriously appointed room, in which hung a large



Pushed aside a heavy curtain.

polished steel mirror. It was evident that Madame Agnes was no stranger in this house of Amaury Montruel.

Taking up a small lamp, she began to arrange her somewhat disordered toilet, pausing now and then to study some pose of head or hand, some attitude which displayed her womanly charms to advantage; and the study of herself, now unadorned by any jewel, seemed to thrill her with pride and sensuous delight.

"He will not be able to resist me! This uncouth soldier shall succumb to my beauty, and leave this house as much my slave as is its master!"

Still no one came. And the mysterious fear of

her rival's unseen power began to torment her.

"If Mahmoud dare not kill her, this Cadocu shall do it at my bidding. I will be Queen in spite of her, and all the thunders of the Church! And when I am once acknowledged, my hand shall fall heavily on those who have dared to slight me. Amaury Montruel has served me well, but—what shall I do with him then? I shall not want him any longer, and he might be inconvenient, he loses his head sometimes. Well, many a one has broken the ladder by which he has scaled the wall, and—they are wise to do so. They say he killed that girl because she knew his secret—he knows mine—what if I follow his example?"

A door banged, and hasty steps were heard coming towards the room.

"At last!" she said, "they are coming."

Montruel flung open the door and entered alone. He crossed to where she was sitting. His face was white and drawn, his eyes looked glassy, and though his lips moved, no sound came from them.

"Well?" she asked angrily. "Can't you speak? Speak! I tell you!" she almost shrieked, stamping her foot.

"Why have you come alone? By the saints! I believe you've dared to disobey me!"

At last the answer came in a low, strained voice:

"No, madame, I have seen him."

"And you told him I desired to see him?"

"I said the Queen desired his presence."

"And yet he is not here! Amaury, you are lying to me!" she exclaimed savagely. "I am a woman, and I saw the look he gave me. He would not refuse! You are lying, I tell you again."

Base and degraded as he was, Amaury Montruel blushed for this woman he loved so madly, and who was so lost to all sense of shame for herself. He turned from her almost in disgust.

"Answer me, sir; did he refuse or not?"

"For your sake, madame, I had rather a thousand times that he had refused."

"Then he has not refused after all? Why did you torture me so, Amaury? It was cruel of you," she added with a swift change of manner.

"But he is not coming."

Her brows contracted again, and her fingers plucked at the lace on her dress till she had torn it to shreds.

Montruel had not been afraid of Cadoc, but he quailed before Agnes de Méranie.

"Listen, my Queen," he said pleadingly, "and you shall hear all, if you desire, but I would gladly have spared you the details of this hateful interview."

She made a sign of acquiescence, and he sat down opposite her. With manifest reluctance, he told her all that had happened since they had parted, even to Cadoc's insulting remarks about her being where she was at that minute. He told her of the man's insolent wish to see her, at which her eyes brightened, and then he hesitated. His lips would not utter the final insult with which he had been stung; but she interrupted him by:

"I guess what's coming."

Amaury looked at her in open-eyed wonderment. There was no trace of anger in her face, she was brimming over with merriment. Would he never know this woman?

"The saucy knave said he would not come to me, but I might go to him! Isn't that it?" she asked, rubbing her hands.

"That is not all, Madame, it is worse than that."

"Worse than that? Well, then, I give it up! Tell me quickly—I am sick of this suspense!"

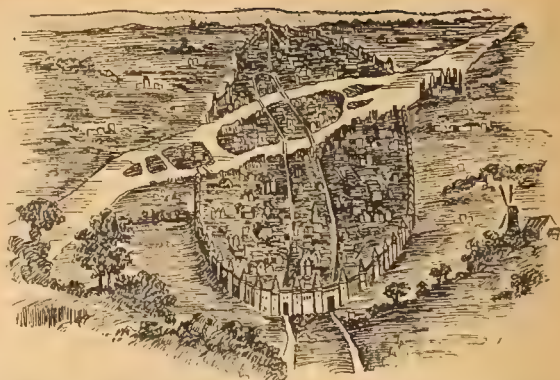
"Madame," he resumed gravely, "I am sure you will share my anger when I tell you that Antoine does not await you in his own house—and that would have been bad enough, Heaven knows—but, at least, there would have been some privacy. No, he dare to ask the Queen of France to pollute her feet by crossing the threshold of the filthy den where he and his ribald crew hold their drunken revels!"

Agnes sprang to her feet and seized her ermine mantle.



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His hands fell to his sides, and his breath came in quick, short gasps.



[THE ABOVE IS A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF PARIS UNDER PHILIP AUGUSTUS DURING THE PERIOD AT WHICH THE EVENTS MENTIONED IN THIS STORY TAKE PLACE.—ED.]

Montruel continued, feeling thankful that at last her pride was roused:

"In that loathsome, reeking tavern of St. Landry, full of foul-mouthed wretches and the off-scourings of the earth."

She had fastened her mantle and was preparing to leave the house as he continued to dilate upon the horrors he had witnessed.

"Are you ready, my Queen?" he asked tenderly, with a proud glance at her resolute face. "May I have the honour of conducting you to the Louvre?"

She gave a short, hard laugh, and said mockingly:

"You may have the honour of conducting me to the St. Landry tavern, my lord!"

Amaury staggered back as if she had struck him. His hands fell to his sides, and his breath came in quick, short gasps.

"Come, come, Sir Amaury; we are losing time. You have painted the picture in such glowing colours that I am quite anxious to see it for myself. You shall take me there, and while I am amusing myself with Captain Cadoc, you shall keep watch for me outside the door, so your delicate senses will not be outraged by the foul sights and smells!"

She turned to the door, and he had no choice but to follow her. They traversed the narrow, filthy streets in silence, for her brain was busy weaving schemes of conquest, and his heart was heavy with shame and torn by conflicting pangs of jealousy and love for the woman he could not even yet wholly despise.

(To be continued.)

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THE BARON'S LOVE STORY.

A True Tale of the Guiana Hinterland.

THE incidents I am about to relate occurred in the year 1815. The strange disappearance of the young Baron von Halsbeck did not attract so much attention as it would have done under ordinary circumstances, because the colony was engaged at the time in speculating on European affairs; and the news of the Baron having been lost in the bush arrived in Georgetown on the very day on which a vessel from Barbados brought the news of the battle of Waterloo, and the breaking, once for all, of Napoleon's power.

The Baron was one of a party of orchid-hunters. He became separated from his companions during a terrible storm and was regarded as lost. The narrative of his adventures were set forth in a worm-eaten manuscript now in the possession of a member of the family.

After a long description of the storm, and his futile endeavours to find his companions, the narrative is continued in the following manner.

THE NARRATIVE OF BARON VON HALSBECK.

Worn out with hunger and fatigue, and disheartened by the knowledge that I was hopelessly separated from my party, I made a rough couch of dry leaves and forest tangle, and lay down to sleep. I was awakened by a small piece of wood striking me on the chest, and, on opening my eyes, I saw standing in front of me, about twenty paces distant, a short, thick-set Indian, who was watching me with the greatest interest.

He continued to stare at me as I rose and brushed away a few leaves that clung to my clothes, but on my trying to approach him he bounded away with great speed. Fortunately, I was more or less acquainted with several Indian dialects, and I was able to make myself understood.

"Do not be afraid," I said; "I am not come to hurt you; I am lost, and desire food."

"Whence come you?" he answered.

"For fifty days I have journeyed from the sea, and now I am lost, and am alone."

"What do you seek here?"

"I seek but to see your country and go my way again."

After saying this, I took off my belt to which were attached my pistols and threw it behind me, with the object of reassuring the man; but he took no notice of my action, and I concluded that he had never before seen firearms.

"Follow me," the man said.

I picked up my belt and made to catch up with him, but he waved me back, and so I kept about twenty paces behind him. We travelled thus for about three hours, the man continually looking behind him to see that I was not getting too close to him.

At length we came to a spot where a rocky plateau with precipitous sides barred further progress. The man faced me and told me to remain where I was until he returned.

He then skirted round the base of the plateau, and was soon out of sight.

I sat down on a fallen tree-trunk and waited. After about an hour the man returned, accompanied by two other men, one very old and the other a heavy, muscular fellow about thirty years of age. This last one was armed with a large wooden club. The three men were clothed alike, in a belt of some rough material woven out of grass.

On seeing me, the new-comers showed great signs of astonishment, and a short argument took place between them and my discoverer.

Presently my conductor addressed me.

"Say, will you come with us, or shall we give you food and let you depart? If you come with us there is no going back."

This strange offer excited my curiosity, and, depending on my ingenuity to extricate me from any position I might subsequently be placed in, I replied:

"Take me with you to your people. I am content."

They blindfolded me with leaves, and the muscular man took my hand and led me. We marched for about an hour by circuitous paths, and crossed two streams, the

one coming up to our knees and the other up to our waists. At length, after making a sharp and difficult ascent, we walked for about ten minutes on level ground, and then the bandage was taken from my eyes.

A curious scene presented itself. I stood in the midst of a circle of small houses, about twenty in number, inclosing an open space free of all weeds and grass, and trodden quite smooth and hard. In the centre of this space was a large rock about ten feet high, in the form of a rude four-sided column; it was covered with curious figures and signs deeply cut into its surface.

I was led to a small house, and was given to understand that it was intended for my own use. Later on, food was brought me—roast flesh and cassava bread. During the course of the day I moved freely about the village, and found that the people spoke a dialect with which I was acquainted. Towards evening I felt inclined to walk in the woods, and, taking one of the two paths which led through the village, I followed it. Before I had gone a hundred yards I was met by a man who pointed to the village and told me to return. He would listen to no argument, but threatened to kill me if I did not go back. It was evident that I was a prisoner.

At night-time a lighted torch was brought into my house, and a young girl fetched me food and water. This girl was called Bian, and during the whole of my captivity she waited on me. She was always at hand, now silent, now full of interesting talk about her people.

I found out exactly how I was situated. The people among whom I had fallen were called Barawois, and were the remnant of a once powerful tribe. Many years before, the tribe, which at that time lived about a hundred miles south-east of its present station, had been set upon by strange Indians, and, with the exception of about forty persons, entirely destroyed. This remnant, after many hardships, had at length discovered the spot which was still its home, and had continued to live there entirely cut off from the world. They worshipped a graven image, and offered up human sacrifices to it.

Each year two virgins were set aside and confined in a special house. One of these were destined to be offered up as a sacrifice. The girls were set aside on the day following the annual ceremony, and were treated with the greatest care after their withdrawal from the rest of the tribe. Should either of the girls die during the year, the remaining one was sacrificed; if both were alive on the day preceding the sacrifice, the choice was made in a manner I will describe later. The one whose fortune it was to be rejected, resumed her ordinary life in the tribe.

The victim was offered up in the following way: She was given a bunch of brilliant flowers, and holding this in one hand, was led by the chief of the tribe to the side of the river. Arrived there, a tree trunk was thrown across to the small ledge where the burnt sacrifice was daily offered up, and along this the girl passed. She then walked out to the small point of rock at the edge of the chasm, and stood with her back to the statue while the preparations were being made.

The mode of sacrifice was very strange. A large stone was secured in a sling of grass-ropes, the ends of the sling being fastened to tree stumps on either side of the river.

The centre of this sling was braced up by a rope, which was fastened round the beckoning hand of the statue. As the tree stumps were situated some distance further down stream than the statue, the stone, on being released, swung outward,

with great force, and precipitated the victim into the awful abyss beyond.

The way of releasing this horrid messenger of death was also strange. A fire, consisting of twenty-four sticks, was lighted under the rope which held back the stone, and it was at the moment that the fire burnt through the rope sufficiently to allow the strain to tear it apart that the victim was hurled into the chasm. There was just a possibility that the fire would not burn through the rope. In the event of this occurring the girl was taken back into the tribe and given the curious privilege of choosing any man in the tribe for her husband, being treated moreover with the greatest consideration for the rest of her days.

That day I learnt that I should not be allowed to depart, lest I betrayed their hiding place; that I must become one of them and marry one of their maidens.

I settled down among these people with a conviction that I would be able to make my escape as soon as it no longer suited me to remain with them. But as the weeks passed it became evident to me that nothing short of a miracle would enable me to leave the tribe. Sentinels were posted at the only places where descent from the plateau was thought possible, and only on one occasion in the year—the evening of the great sacrifice—were these men ever absent from their posts, and then it was but for half an hour. To this must be added the fact that I was in an unknown country and unprovided with a guide or the necessary stock of food.

One evening, as I passed the house of the two girls chosen for the next sacrifice, I saw one of them. The girl was, I should judge, about seventeen years of age. Her form was of the most perfect symmetry, slender and graceful and full of the most delicate, tender lines, giving her whole figure an air of gentle, budding womanhood, charming beyond the power of words to express. Her face was not less pleasing than her form. Her eyes were large and set well apart, her forehead low and broad, her nose small and slightly aquiline. Her mouth was exquisitely shaped. Add to this, long, coarse, black hair, a skin of a rich golden-brown colour, and you have before you Opaie, the sacrifice.

That night I questioned Bian about the girl I had seen.

"She of whom you speak is my sister Opaie," she said. "She is a virgin set aside for sacrifice."

"My people," I said, "when they see a woman like that, reserve for her a better fate than that she should be offered up to please a graven image whose eyes are blind and who knows naught of the beauty of woman."

"Well, Kaboot, (white man) it may be that the other one, Malkoona, will be chosen."

"And then Opaie would be free?"

"She would be free, but the chief Petarie, would then take her for his wife. I know his heart in the matter."

"But I, Bian, have other plans for thy sister, and it shall be seen who is stronger, I or thy chief Petarie."

But Bian laughed at me and said: "Kaboot, thou art indeed a fool, for all thy fair skin and golden hair."

But a fixed determination had seized me. If I was indeed to remain all my life among these people, I would, at any cost, have Opaie for my wife.

From the day on which I saw Opaie I sought every opportunity of speaking with her. I had become fairly proficient in the language of the Barawois, and so by using great precautions I succeeded in establishing an understanding with Opaie. As the months passed I was

fortunately able to win Bian over to my plans, and she promised to help me in any way she could when the time came.

Opaie was by no means so indifferent to her fate as her sister had represented her to be when I had first spoken on the subject to her. And at last, after much careful thought, we arranged a plan, the successful carrying out of which would set Opaie free and leave me master of the situation.

The plan which we eventually decided on was this: If Malkoona did not die (Opaie's death was never thought of, so far removed did death seem from such perfection of life), then the selection of victims would take place. If Malkoona were chosen, well and good. In that case, I was to shoot Petarie (I had powder and shot in my belt, which had not been taken from me) and rely on the effect produced by my pistol to insure my subsequent safety.

If, on the other hand, Opaie was chosen, the position would be far more serious. The Barawois were intensely superstitious, and no pistol-shots would save the victim from the sacrifice. Strategy was the only method which offered any hopes of success if Opaie were chosen as the victim.

There was the chance, of course, that the wood might not burn, but in the event of it showing signs of becoming consumed, we arranged with Bian that, at a signal from me, she was to cause a diversion from the business in hand by raising a great outcry on the other side of the village, calling out that strangers were attacking the place, and Opaie and I, profiting by the confusion that would ensue, were to make away to a spot fixed upon by Bian, who knew the country round the base of the plateau very well. Bian was to join us at this post as soon as possible, and we would then make the best of our way to the civilised country.

Slowly the months passed, and at length the time for the annual sacrifice drew near. On the day which was to see the selections of the victims, I was in a state of almost unendurable suspense, and it seemed to me that the evening would never come. However, about five in the afternoon, the loud blowing of conch shells told me that the time had arrived when I would have to begin the carrying out of my schemes. I will not enter into the details of the ceremony of choosing; I cannot bear to think of my feverish anxiety, even now.

Opaie was the chosen victim!

Sleep, of course, was impossible, and I lay awake thinking over the position. Up to that time I had been in a most excited state, but later on the position became terribly complicated by a succession of entirely unforeseen circumstances, and I have to thank that day for many a grey hair.

Nothing occurred during the early part of the day, and in the afternoon I went down to the river-side to watch the preparations. When I arrived on the scene the stone was being fixed in the sling. As I stood there, the only idle one among so many, I noticed something floating down the river.

When it came close to me I saw that it was a piece of newspaper! It passed so close to the bank that there was no chance of my being mistaken. I was so intensely surprised at the strange messenger of civilisation that I nearly cried out. No one else noticed the fragment, and in a moment it was swept over the fall.

There was only one explanation of the presence of this piece of printed paper, and that was the existence of some party of explorers, who must have made the ascent of

the northern face of the plateau and were following the stream down. As the northern extremity of the plateau was considered unscalable by the Barawois, no sentinel was placed there; and if the party were engaged as I conjectured, they would be able to approach quite close to the village without being discovered, provided they were observing the ordinary precautions of bush travellers.

The question for me to consider was this: How far away was this party at the moment? They might be within a mile or two, or they might be half a day's journey off. In any case I must find means of communicating with them. Supposing anything went wrong with my plans, and Opaie and I were compelled to make a bolt for our lives, we should have a splendid chance of getting back to civilisation.

And now I was brought face to face with a very serious difficulty. I could easily write a note on a piece of *rapulo* (a kind of fine bark) and despatch Bian up the river with it, as she would not be stopped by the sentinels. But if I did this, and she did not return before the sacrifice, I should be in an extremely awkward position, as Bian would not be there to create a diversion while I rescued Opaie.

After thinking the matter over, I decided to risk it. The party of explorers, even if they did not arrive in time to stop the sacrifice, would at any rate hurry up, and might be counted on to put in an appearance within a few hours, and it was possible that I might delay the sacrifice, by some means or other, long enough to allow them time to get on the scene.

There was no time to be lost, so I went to my house and explained the matter to Bian. She at once grasped the situation and I sent her off with a note to the exploring party.

As the afternoon closed I was almost sick with the intense mental strain to which I was being subjected. When the time arrived, I armed myself with my pistols and hunting-knife and went down to the river-side, taking up my stand close to one of the stumps to which the sling was fastened.

Soon afterwards I heard the procession approaching, and in a few moments it came in sight. Petarie led the way, and a few paces behind came Opaie, bearing in her hand the brilliant flowers used on such occasions. She looked very troubled and anxious, and I took an opportunity, when no one was looking my way, to give her a smile of encouragement, though I was ill at ease. Opaie was led out immediately and stepped on to the ledge of the rock more firmly than I dared to hope. She stood there in that awful place, with the evening light playing about her exquisite form—a vision of loveliness.

The preparations went on. The stone was braced back and secured to the hand of the image. Then this thing happened:

The man who was carrying the bundle of sticks across to the base of the statue suddenly stumbled, and in righting himself dropped the whole of them into the water.

I was horror-struck, and waited breathlessly for the next move. Would they put off the sacrifice till the next day in order that a fresh set of sticks might be exposed in the usual way, or would they consider this as an indication that the victim was to be spared? There was a short consultation, and then a man left the crowd and made off in the direction of the village.

I determined to allow as much time as possible to pass before I took the affair into my own hands. Not

until the fire was lighted would I give any sign. If it came to that point, I would cut my side of the sling, thus putting Opaie out of immediate danger, and then act as circumstances might direct.

I was engaged in trying to work out the situation when the man who had gone to the village returned, bringing with him a fresh bundle of sticks. So the sacrifice was to go on! I glanced round at Opaie. She was standing erect, it seemed from her bearing that she was gaining hope from the delay.

The bundle of sticks was laid, and the fire lighted, and the first little puff of smoke rose in the air. There was no danger for a couple of minutes longer. I determined to count fifty and then cut the rope.

I felt my pistols—forty, forty-one, forty-two, forty-three—my knife—forty-four, forty-five, forty-six—

At this moment I heard on the other side of the village a great shout and the din of fire-arms, and above all, Bian's shrill voice crying out for help.

The Barawois, struck with astonishment, rushed off at once in the direction of the outeries. In an instant I cut the sling, and, seeing the stone fall harmlessly in the stream, gave a shout of encouragement to Opaie, and then dashed off to the scene of action. The Barawois had no chance from the first, and, after a very short fight, the affair was at an end.

When everything quieted down and the Barawois were placed under guard, I returned to the river-side to fetch Opaie. She had walked to the foot of the statue, and then, overcome by the terrible mental strain of the ordeal, had fainted. She lay on her back, and so narrow was the place, that her feet were in the water on one side, and on the other her long hair was trailing in the stream.

We got her safely to the bank, and then I took her in my arms and carried her into my house, where Bian was waiting for us.

This is the end of the Baron's narrative, but the subsequent events were related by his nephew.

It appears that the Baron and his rescuers (a large party of English explorers) returned to the coast through Venezuela, and that the Baron left Opaie in charge of a certain lady in Caracas. Bian remained with her people.

This lady was of good family, and was the wife of a Spanish merchant named Luis de Gayangos. The Baron then returned to Europe, set his affairs in good order, and some months later returned to Caracas. Here a severe disappointment awaited him. No trace of Luis de Gayangos could be found. The family had gone to La Guayra and the business of Luis de Gayangos had been finished some months before the Baron's arrival. After spending some time in vain endeavours to find Opaie the Baron finally returned to Europe a disappointed man.

Some years later, Opaie's fate became known. During the war which ended in the adoption of the constitution of Columbia, with Simon Boliver "El Liberador," as President, the Spanish merchant, Luis de Gayangos, fell under suspicion of being in active co-operation with the patriots, and, in order to save himself from being arrested by the royalist troops, he fled to the town of Tunja in Columbia. In June, 1819, the battle of that name was fought. After a severe fight Boliver was victorious, but not without the loss of many men.

When the engagement was at its height, Opaie, who had imprudently gone out into a narrow street parallel to the main thoroughfare, was struck by a stray bullet and killed. So she but escaped death at the hand of savages to meet it among civilised folk.

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REAL GHOST STORIES. By E. and H. HERON. No. IV.—The Story of Baelbrow. (Illustrated by B. E. Minna.) A Complete Story.

THE AMEER OF AFGHANISTAN. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By LILLIAS HAMILTON. This is the first authentic account which has ever appeared of the private life and personal characteristics of the Ameer of Afghanistan. As will be readily understood, the writer, for some time lady physician to the Ameer, had special facilities, which would not be open to the ordinary observer, for studying the peculiar traits in his character.

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OUR ONLY VINEYARD. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By H. C. FIFE. The Marquis of Bute owns the only vineyard in the British Isles. Excellent photographs of it are given, as well as full particulars as to the annual yield and the price obtained for the wine, which, by the way, is pronounced by connoisseurs to resemble a first-class champagne.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. (Illustrated by A. Popini.) By W. L. ALDEN. Mice, flies, parrots, and boys are the little worries of life which are here dealt with by Mr. Alden in his most amusing manner.

Ya-Ling, The Willow-Tree, and The Golden Lilies.



YA-LING was the only son of his Mother, and he loved her dearly. He was Head Man of the village of Happy Flowers, and had many rice fields. His house was guarded with a screen of fruit-trees and behind it the Willow-trees kept away all bad fairies. Now his Mother was old and childish, and the time was come for him to be in sorrow and alone.

Her last words to him were:

"Dear son Ya-ling, seek the Willow-tree and the Golden Lilies."

And Ya-ling, though he was wise in the village, was not wise at home, so he did not understand her. But he was anxious to please her, so he promised to do as she said, and when the days of his mourning were ended, he thought of his promise. His rice was all planted, his fruit-trees were covered with beautiful flowers. The village was prosperous and the people were happy. So Ya-ling went to the hill top behind the fields where dwelt an old hermit. He could not have gone had not the village been in good order, because he was Head Man and had to look after it. As it was, his journey was a long one. But in three days he reached the top of Nan-ping, and he saw the Old Man of the Mountain sitting on a stone outside his cave. A willow waved its

branches overhead, and by his side was a pool of water, on whose surface floated some beautiful lilies. How delighted Ya-ling was when he saw them!

He made reverence to the Old Man and said:

"Oh, Old Man of Nan-ping, be good enough to give me a branch of the Willow-tree and two Golden Lilies."

And the Old Man answered:

"When two men in your village both grown grain in one field and are contented; when the learned man shall know how little he knows; then you shall have a Willow-branch."

"And how about the lilies, sir?" said Ya-ling.

"One thing at one time," said the Old Man.

So Ya-ling went back to the village.

The day after he got home, he called two neighbours of his and said:

"Neighbours, I give you one of my rice fields; you are both to sow grain in it and be content. If you quarrel, you will have to give it to me back again."

The neighbours thanked him many times, and Ya-ling said to himself when they were gone:

"That is a good idea; they are not likely to quarrel over the ground they don't pay for."

Next day, as he passed through the village, he saw some children playing, and he watched the game. The trees hid him from the children, who were too intent on their game to notice him. One tall lad called two others, and said:

"I am the Head Man, and I give you a rice-field. As long as you do not quarrel, I will give it you."

All the other children laughed, for the boy spoke in a gruff voice, just as if he were a big man.

Then one of the boys to whom he had spoken said:

"Sir, please how can we both sow, and not quarrel? How shall we decide which is our part of the field?"

The pretended Head Man looked so puzzled, that the other children shouted with laughter.

Then the lad said:

"I did not bargain to answer hard questions. Our real Head Man was not asked anything of the sort, and I don't believe he could have answered if they had asked him."

"You are cross," said one of the boys; "but don't you think Ming-sa would know?"

"I'll go and ask her," said the other, and he ran off into a garden near by.

Soon he came back with a smile on his face. Calling the pretended neighbours before him, he said:

"Look you, friends, divide between yourselves the rice field. Let each take half, then you will be at peace. As for me, I am a fool, but I still am a worthy Head Man, for it takes Wisdom to know Folly!"

"Ming-sa is right!" shouted the children; and they were so pleased at this happy ending to their game that they never saw Ya-ling slip away.

He was delighted with what he had heard. And when next morning the two real neighbours came before him grumbling and quarrelling, he decided between them as Ming-sa advised. The children rather wondered when they heard, and Ming-sa, who lived by her father's rice field, with her younger brothers and sisters, was astonished. But as she said nothing about it, the villagers put the wise words down to the Head Man's credit, and thought more of him than ever.

So Ya-ling went to claim the Willow-branch, and the

Old Man of the Mountain kept his word and gave it him. Then Ya-ling asked for the Lilies.

"Nay, my son," said the Old Man, "only the truthful tongue can own them; if I gave them to you they would fade."

"I don't see why," said Ya-ling.

The Old Man's voice grew very grave. He stooped and picked two of the Golden Blooms.

"Take them," he said; "but do not think they will be pleasant to your eyes till you own the cheat by which you gained the Willow-branch."

"What do you mean?" stammered Ya-ling in great confusion.

"I mean," said the Old Man, "the lie you told when you decided the quarrel between your neighbours. Did you not pretend that it was your wisdom, so that all the village might praise you? Shame on you, miserable man that you are! Do you let Ming-sa toil all day, and then must needs steal her wisdom too!"

Poor Ya-ling was terribly frightened at these words.

"What shall I, do?" he cried. "I did not mean to do any harm, I never thought——"

"So I should suppose! Well, take the Lilies, but remember, until you see them with Ming-sa's eyes, the sight of them will be dreadful to you. And until then, do not dare to part with them, for if you do you shall die."

Ya-ling sorrowfully obeyed. He took the Lilies and the Branch, and went back to his village. There he planted the Branch, and it made a fine tree just by the gate of his house.

But the Lilies he hated; for every time he looked at them their colour looked different, and every night in his dreams they seemed close beside him.

At last the Lilies worried his stupid head so much that he became thin and worn-looking, and the villagers noticed it. The children heard their parents speak of it too. As the days went by Ya-ling grew worse, and could walk no farther than his garden gate.

One day, as he sat there in the shade of a mango tree, Ming-sa passed by with her baby sister. In the gateway stood a willow, and here they stopped to rest a bit. They did not see Ya-ling.

"Is 'this where the sick man is?" said the little one.

"Yes," said Ming-sa sorrowfully. "He is a good man. I wish I could make him well."

"Would you give him your eyes and your hands?" said her sister.

"What a funny child you are!" said Ming-sa. "It is time we went home now."

"But would you?" said the child earnestly.

Ming-sa thought a minute.

"Yes," she said, "if father and mother would let me; you see, he is



Ming-sa passed with her baby sister.

kind, if he is not very wise, and the people love him."

Ya-ling was glad when he heard that. If he was not very wise he knew what he wanted, so he sent in haste for Ming-sa's father and he said:

"Honoured neighbour, your daughter is wise and virtuous; let me have her for my wife."

And Ming-sa's father agreed.

Not long after, Ming-sa came to her new home.

And the first thing Ya-ling did was to tell her how he had learnt his wise speech to his neighbours. The next thing he did was to show her the Lilies. But he did not look himself. "They are on the shelf," he said. So Ming-sa went to see what they were like.

"Oh!" she cried, "how golden they are! Dear husband, look at them once again. They are so lovely."

And to please her, he did. Then a cry of joy broke from his lips.

"I can see them," he said, and he cried with delight. Just then they heard some one knocking.

"Come in," cried Ming-sa-ling.

And in came the Old Man of the Mountain.

Ya-ling ran eagerly up to him.

"Sir," he cried, "I can see their beauty, but I don't understand why!"

"My son," said the Old Man, "I knew and loved your mother, and I bade her give you that last command. 'You are stupid, but Ming-sa is wise. You have lied, but she is truthful. You are rich in goods and she is in virtue. But you are willing to share and so is she. That makes things right and just. She gives you her hands and eyes; do you give her your trust?'"

"Indeed I will," said Ya-ling.

"Her feet are Golden Lilies, her form is like the Willow. They are the things you need. Leave to the solitary the magic charms, content yourself with the real."

The Old Man vanished with these last words and the Lilies disappeared too. The Willow faded and soon died. But Ya-ling did not mind. His Ming-sa was Lilies and Willow to him and he never wanted any other.

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James and John and Two Pretty Girls.

JAMES READE was sitting in the garden, ostensibly reading, but in reality turning over in his mind a serious matter which had worried him and his brother for some weeks, when suddenly an inspiration came to him.

It seemed so simple and promising, and withal so scientific, that he was sure it was just what they needed. In his haste to tell John about it he gathered his books up in his arms and fairly ran to the house. He thrust one book, open, under the nose of the astonished John, who was deep in the mysteries of his microscope.

"There!" said James, glowing with triumphant pleasure. "Read that! I think you will find that it contains a suggestion how we may find out what Miss Vail's feelings are towards you!"

John read the following, slowly, and with an occasional pause:

"Just as a watch is influenced by an electric current, so is it acted upon by the nervous temperament of a human being. The demonstrations of this have generally been confined to the watches of women, not only owing to their greater degree of nervous force, but also because a man's watch does not come into such direct contact with it. Most women thrust their watches in front of their dresses where they are placed in close proximity to the heart. When the wearer is excited, the quickening of the nervous current communicates itself to the delicate mechanisms of the watch and produces similar quickening of the machinery, thereby causing the watch to gain time. In like manner, when a person is depressed, and her nervous current running sluggishly, it has a retarding effect upon the watch, and causes it to lose time in exact proportion to the amount of the wearer's depression. It is a fact well known even outside scientific circles, that a woman's watch is rarely correct."

John finished reading. Simultaneously he and James leant back, took off their glasses, which they began to polish, and beamed at each other.

"James," said John, "I always told you that you showed genius in applying your knowledge."

John Reade and James his younger brother were wealthy bachelors, who had never found it necessary to go into business. Ever since they had left college twenty years before, they had merely gratified their fondness for study and scientific research. They never became more than amateurs, for they were interested in too many branches to pursue any one experiment to its practical end.

Everyone liked the two brothers; they were gentle, kindly, and sympathetic, and if they chose to busy themselves with useless, unremunerative study, nobody cared.

Their lives had heretofore been peaceful and quiet, but recently a new element had entered, one which threatened great disturbance. John had made the most startling discovery of his life—that he was



in love. It seemed to give him more importance in his own eyes and to invest him with a certain romantic charm. He polished his spectacles, patted his hair a little and looked in the glass. It seemed to him that his appearance was more youthful. He was only forty odd, but he had not noticed that his sister's children were growing up. The adored was over thirty, so that—well, they were both in the prime of life, neither too old nor too young.

Mr. Reade had confided all to his brother, and had been pleasantly excited by the awe with which it caused James to regard him. Such a thing was so foreign to their habits that it astounded these simple gentlemen. The fact that John was a victim of this strange malady made him quite a hero.

"But the question is, James," John had said uneasily, "having discovered I am in love, what is to be done next?"

It was indeed a question. How was John to find out the state of Miss Vail's feelings towards him?

"I am afraid," James had replied, after a long pause, "that perhaps we were wrong to neglect these things when we were younger. If we had only had a little experience now!"

"I had begun to fear so myself," said John. "Lucy's boys would find no such difficulty, I am sure. But, dear me, I don't think they had much experience."

"No, I've never observed anything," said James.

John continued.

"Still, it is strange, when you think of it, how many have married. It had never occurred to me before that they must have proposed."

"I wonder—do you think," began James, "these things in the comic papers say—about leap year?"

For just a second Mr. Reade's mild face lighted up with hope, but it was only a passing gleam.

"Of course, I don't know," he said, "but I should be inclined to doubt that a lady would really propose to a man. I never inquired whether these jokes were founded on fact. However, I scarcely think Miss Vail would do so; the next leap year is two years off. I should hardly like to wait so long on a chance.

"If I were quite sure that Miss Vail would look favourably upon my suit," he continued, "I think I could manage to put the question. But it would be most embarrassing to be refused, and I have no way of ascertaining her feelings."

Miss Vail and her sister Kitty were making a long visit to Mrs. Burton, *née* Reade. The ladies necessarily saw a good deal of Mr. Reade, and he had fallen in love with Miss Vail, while at the same time it looked as if one or both of Mrs. Burton's sons would become a victim to the charms of the younger sister before the summer was over.

Miss Vail enjoyed talking with Mr. Reade and hearing his opinions of the discoveries of the day. That much he could see, but his accustomed eyes could detect no difference in her treatment of him from that which she accorded her other friends, and further complications arose from his fear that his nephew would discover how things were, if he were to pay Miss Vail any little attention.

John was therefore in a frame of mind to seize upon any suggestion, and his brother was equally disturbed and most anxious to help him. So when the idea of the watch presented itself, it seemed to them Heaven-sent. John was filled with admiration for James's cleverness, and James glowed with pleasure at John's appreciation.

"We must be discreet," said James, after the first excitement had subsided. "I think we ought to have a watch made for the purpose, for, of course, the more delicate the works are, the more easily they will be affected."

"Precisely," said John. "I will go to the watch-maker's myself to-morrow and order a special one to be made."

The amount of talking and planning these two did that day! Not only all the afternoon, but in the evening again, until James found, to his astonishment, that it was after midnight, and betook himself to bed. But Mr. Reade feared that he was somewhat excited and would be unable to sleep, so he said he would read a little to rest his brain.

The very air of the study seemed charged with mystery and importance during the time necessary for the construction of the watch. John and James forsook their books for hours at a time to rehearse their plans. They had them carefully laid out, though one point caused them a temporary heartsinking. How were they to get her to wear the watch?

John could not well give it to her; that would be too open, and the boys—oh, no, not that! At length they hit upon an idea.

Miss Vail was interested in botany, and Mr. Reade arranged to take her one afternoon to see some curious plants which he had discovered. An hour before the appointed time he and James stole out of the house carrying the watch. They went for some distance along the path in the wood, and then, setting the hand of the watch half-an-hour ahead, they placed it on the ground

where anyone who passed would see it. Then they stepped back and regarded it from different points to make sure that it was sufficiently comprehensive.

"Now," said James, "you go back for Miss Vail, and I will stay for awhile in case anyone should come along first."

And John went away in a state of tremendous excitement.

Miss Vail thought she had never known Mr. Reade to be so absent-minded. She tried to get his opinion upon certain fossil remains that had just been unearthed, but found him unresponsive. His mind was apparently concentrated upon botany.

"It is very important that we keep our eyes on the ground, Miss Vail, or we may overlook the plants," he said almost abruptly, while she was asking him to explain the difference between the various kinds of oaks. He was sorry to interrupt her, but he really could not have her staring up into the trees at this particular point in the road.

Miss Vail dutifully turned her eyes earthward. Presently she gave an exclamation of surprise as she came upon the watch, lying face up and ticking cheerfully. She picked it up and examined it closely.

"What a pity that someone should have lost such a beautiful watch!" she said. "There are no initials on it, either."

"Finding is keeping," then," quoted Mr. Reade.

"Oh, I shall advertise, of course," was the prompt reply, which did not disturb Mr. Reade, for he knew there would be no answer.

"It doesn't seem to keep very good time," he said, comparing it with his own. "You should let me regulate it for you."

"Indeed, I should be very glad if you would; and if we don't find the owner, I think I shall give it to Kitty—she hasn't one."

Mr. Reade stopped short. To have his plans upset in this simple manner dismayed him. It was not for Kitty he had had the watch made, and her nervous temperament did not interest him. Miss Vail looked at him inquiringly.

"Surely," he stammered, "you do not intend to entrust so valuable a watch to her? She's too young; she would break it. Really, I should consider it most unwise."

"Well," said Miss Vail, laughing at his earnestness, "perhaps you are right. I will keep this and give her my old one."

Mr. Reade breathed again.

"A very sensible arrangement," he said.

His satisfaction increased as Miss Vail fixed the watch in the front of her dress. They continued their walk, and saw the rare plants. Mr. Reade became most lively and entertaining.

That evening John and James held a congratulatory meeting in the study. Their scheme was under way, at all events; the next thing was to reap the results.

John now began to be more specific in his attentions to Miss Vail.

"Elation," said he, "should cause the watch to gain time. If a lady finds herself the recipient of compliments from a gentleman of whom she is fond, it would be natural that she should be elated, would it not, James?"

James thought that it would.

"Therefore," John continued, "I spent this afternoon trying to gently insinuate my regards. If she is pleased, it ought to be shown by the watch to-morrow."

It was with some trepidation that he took the watch on the following day, under pretext of regulating it. He studied it anxiously; it had gained three minutes.

Mr. Reade made a rapid mental calculation, and thought: "That is something, but it is not sufficient gain to warrant me in feeling particularly encouraged. I must wait."

He told James, who at once expressed the opinion that some more decisive step should be taken.

"Suppose you were to send her up some chocolate or some flowers," he suggested.

John rather recoiled, on account of his present fear of his nephews.

"The boys would think it so unusual for me to give anyone flowers," he objected. "If there were any reason for it—if there were something very rare, that anybody might be interested in, for instance—" a pause.

"We have not tried the effect of depression yet," James said.

"That will be much more complicated, I fear, James."

"Not at all. Suppose I undertake to talk with Miss Vail, and tell her that I believe you are exceedingly attracted by her sister. If she is fond of you, that should make her feel uneasy, and the watch would lose."

Personal feelings overcame scientific considerations, and Mr. Reade answered promptly:

"But I don't want her to feel uneasy!"

"Then there is nothing to do but to try elation once more. If you wish, I will try to make her see that your affections are directed towards her, and you can call in the evening and see the result."

"I wish you would propose for me at the same time," sighed Mr. Reade.

But on this point he met with a decided refusal. James said there were some things that a man must attend to himself. The rest of the mission he undertook, and started upon it early the next day.

He was gone most of the morning, but he was unable to give John much information when he got back.

"I flatter myself that I did it very delicately," he acknowledged, "but it is extremely difficult to tell what Miss Vail thinks. Of course, I did not say that you were in love with her, but I hinted it. She laughed and rather pooch-pooched the idea."

John felt uneasy; he had an impression that he was in for it now. He resolved not to wait for the evening, but to go and see Miss Vail in the afternoon. James applauded the determination, as the watch would have less opportunity of being influenced by other events which might arise in the meantime.

Mr. Reade thought that James's talk might have put new ideas into Miss Vail's head, and that she might in consequence treat him differently, but he was mistaken. She was precisely the same, and he saw that he should have to depend solely upon science. He seized the first opportunity to ask if he should look at the watch. Miss Vail handed it to him with a laugh.

"See," she said, "hasn't it been behaving shockingly? That is——"

But Mr. Reade was not listening. He was staring at the watch. It was an hour and three-quarters ahead of time!

Surely no one need desire more encouragement than that! She must have been very much overjoyed at what James had said for such an effect as this to have been produced. In view of such convincing proofs of her affection he would hesitate no longer.

"Then you *do* love me, Miss Margaret?" he exclaimed. "Will you marry me?"

It was much simpler to accomplish than he had expected. It is true Miss Vail was somewhat startled, but she recovered her composure with commendable promptitude and assented, with a decided twinkle in her eyes:

"Yes, I will, and I do, but however did you find it out?"

He did not tell her just that minute, but later he repeated the history of the watch to her, full of pride and pleasure in the success of his scientific courtship. He did not understand why the twinkle in Miss Vail's eyes increased until there was too much twinkle to be confined there, and it extended to her mouth as well, and made dimples that were out of all keeping with so learned a subject. When he had finished, she said:

"What a dear, stupid goose you are! I have been positively flinging myself at your head for the last month."

And then, with another burst of merriment which Mr. Reade found infectious even before he knew the cause:

"As for the watch, I only put it on when I saw you come in the gate. Kitty has been wearing it all the morning!"

That evening John and James held another congratulatory meeting in the study. The result of the wooing was so happy that neither was disposed to grumble because it was not accomplished exactly as they had expected it to be.

"There is only one thing that troubles me," said John.

"Yes?" said James questioningly.

"It is that when Margaret becomes my wife, I shall naturally have more demands upon my time."

"Of course, John."

"And I am afraid you will be left to yourself a good deal."

Mr. Reade looked seriously at his brother; there was something strange about James's expression. John could not make it out.

Then James spoke.

"John," he said mildly, "this morning, and again this afternoon while you were talking to Miss Vail, I was arranging things with Kitty, and we are going to be married at the same time that you are."

H. T. P.

Next Week's *SHORT STORIES* will be the

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WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulae from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibxin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vesicle tissues generally."

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The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

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YOU AND I.

WE want one clean and perfect copy of each of the following numbers of *Short Stories*: 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 124, 127, 128, 137, 140, 141, 151, 233, and will pay sixpence each for them. Copies should be addressed to the PUBLISHER.

EVA—The hair of Italian women grows longer than that of any other nationality. On an average, English women have the shortest hair.

INSOMNIA.—You say that the old remedy of courting sleep has proved ineffectual. It may surprise you to hear, however, that sleep may be obtained by trying to keep the eyes open and fixed on some particular object, real or imaginary. This effort relieves the mind from thoughts that perplex it, and diverts the attention from oneself, and before you are aware of it the struggle will have ended, and sleep will be victorious.

SMOKER asks: "Where did tobacco originally come from?"—It would be difficult to say, for the plant has never been found growing wild in any part of the world. It is believed, however, to be a native of tropical America.

TRAMP wants to know if it is true that dummy windows in old houses are a sign that a murder has been committed in the room to which they belong.—Certainly not, although they are ugly enough to suggest almost anything. They are, however, only relics of the days when windows were taxed. A dummy window, of course, was not taxed, and was put in for the sake of preserving the symmetrical appearance of the house from the outside.

YOUNG BACHELOR was much alarmed the other day by a statement he saw in a certain paper to the effect that single men do not live so long as married men, and he nervously asks if this is true.—Without wishing to further alarm you, I am bound to say that, according to statistics, it is a fact. Seven married men in every thousand die between the ages of thirty and forty, but the rate of single men is twelve per thousand.

S. P.—A very simple and effective means to stop snoring is to touch the throat of the sleeper, pressing it very slightly.

M. H. S. puts the following question: "What is the reason that on going into a dark room suddenly from the daylight, one cannot for a few moments distinguish objects that eventually become quite clear?"—

—The reason is that while in the strong light of day the pupil of the eye has become contracted, and it cannot at once enlarge to admit sufficient rays of light to enable the individual to see clearly.

D. G. H.—It is the Queen that dissolves Parliament, not the Prime Minister, and her method of doing so is by proclamation. In the proclamation the date of the assembling of the new Parliament is also fixed. Of course, Her Majesty acts under the advice of her Ministers.

B. L. N. asks: "Has a dromedary two humps or one, or is a one-humped dromedary a camel?"—An African dromedary is a light, slimly-built camel with one hump; it is the Bactrian camel, from Asia Minor, that has two humps. The latter animal is becoming very scarce indeed.

PERRY asks: "Which is the tallest race of people?"—The North American Indian stands higher than any other race of the world, but the Patagonian runs him very close; then come the inhabitants of Norway, Great Britain, British America, Sweden, Ireland, Denmark and Holland.

SCOTTY is anxious to know the origin of "Auld Lang Syne."—It is of uncertain origin, for there being several versions of it. One of the best is by Burns, but only the second and third stanzas are by this poet, the remainder being from the pen of Ramsay. One version is dated 1716; another is said to be dated from the sixteenth century.

F. A. C. seeks the explanation of the reason intoxicated people frequently see double.—Because the nerve centres are changed by the action of alcoholic poison. There is a want of harmony in the action of the muscles which move the eyeballs, and, consequently, instead of both eyes being focussed simultaneously on one object, one eye receives an impression independently of the other. The two impressions are communicated to the brain, and the object is therefore seen twice.

R. S.—There cannot possibly be 366 days in any year except in a leap year. It is possible, however by sailing eastwards round the world to split up the year into 366 periods, each consisting of a night and a day. On the other hand by sailing westwards the number of such periods becomes reduced to 364.

T. S.—The halfpenny stamp did not put in an appearance until thirty years after the penny one.

O. P.—Curiously enough, O. P. also has a question to put with regard to the human stature. He asks: "How is it that blonde nations are generally taller than their darker neighbours?"

—It is due to the geological position of the blonde races. They are characteristic of the north, and on account of the lower degree of temperature are induced to take more exercise, which throws them more in the open air, and thereby increases the rate of their growth.

T. B. wants to know if, on meeting a lady of his acquaintance in the street, he should remove his glove before shaking hands with her.—No, it is not considered necessary nowadays. The older fashion—which many still consider the better of the two—was to remove the right-hand-glove when possible, or to apologise if unable to do so. The custom originated in the Middle Ages, when the knight's gauntlet would be apt to injure a lady's hand.

J. J. writes to say that a few weeks back he noticed we informed a correspondent, through these columns, of the amount of gold contained by the oceans of the world so far as it is possible to gauge it. He would like to know if the sea contains silver also, and, if so, what quantity.—Scientists declare that the water in the whole ocean contains in solution more than 2,000,000 tons of pure silver, not to speak of the untold wealth it must have reaped from wrecked vessels.

W. F. C.—Such a thing as a cigar was quite unknown until the beginning of the present century, so that the one which you say you have in your possession cannot be so old as you imagine.

T. D.—The disease you refer to is probably that which prevails in Senegal and along the western interior of Africa, the symptom of which is a gradually increasing torpor, until the victim can no longer keep awake, and falls into a deep slumber from which nothing can arouse him. In this case he remains, perhaps, for a long time, until death overtakes him.

BACHELOR writes to ask whether I am of an opinion that plain girls make better wives than their more good-looking sisters.—Such an idea is absurd, to say the least of it. This is one of those matters upon which it is impossible to generalise. It does not follow that because a woman is beautiful she must of necessity be vain and frivolous and fonder of pleasure than attending to her domestic affairs. Good and bad wives are to be found among both classes, and no hard and fast lines can be drawn.

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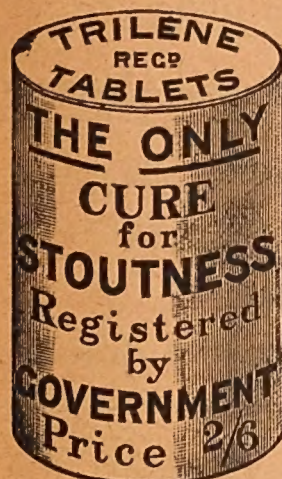
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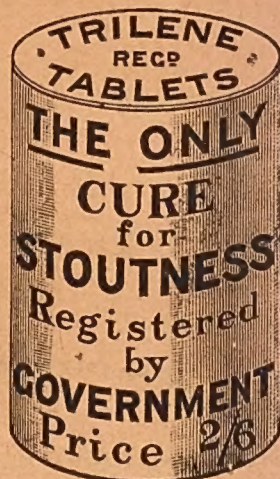
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An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION**,
66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87, Alexandra Road, Norwich, Oct. 19th, 1896.
"GENTLEMEN,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them—their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was for many years growing too stout; but although the disease was, I consider, chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks; and if I can do anything to promote your interests, I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANNAM."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me directly your excellent Tablets."

SURGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes from Ihansi, India: "September 12th, 1897. In my experience your Tablets form an efficient remedy for reducing weight."

LADY CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

MRS. BOSTON, of Clifford Street, South Wigston, Leicester, writes: "I am much thinner and lighter in myself since taking your Tablets."

W. G. LOVE, 4, Kirk Street, Peterhead, N.B., says: "I finished Tablets a fortnight ago, and am reduced a great deal—never felt better in my life."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

MISS S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me much good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk either by means of severe dieting or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a case of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are guaranteed absolutely harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, or any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing Cure for Obesity. The Tablets are sold in boxes at 2s. 6d., and are obtainable from the Trilene Company, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London."

25, Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
MISS M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.
MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

MRS. HUTCHINSON, 46, Irwell Street, Widnes, Lancashire, writes: "I have taken three boxes and am reduced 2st."

A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

MISS WELLS, Aldeburgh Hall, Saxmundham, writes: "I am pleased to say I receive great benefit from them."

MISS DUGGLEBY, 16, New Road, Driffield, writes: "The girl who took your Tablets is reduced about 23st."

MRS. C. E. SINGLETON, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says: "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

MISS MACPHERSON, Balmagowan Lodge, Methuen, Perth, says: "I have taken one box, and am reduced 1st."

MRS. EDMONDS, Pontyguesta, Pontyehin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

MARIAN TAYLOR, Church Farm, St. James, Halesworth, says: "I have lost quite 2st. since taking your Tablets."

MISS GILLESPIE, 50, Chancer Road, Forest Gate, Essex, says: "I have lost just 3st."

E. NICHOLSON, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

COUNTESS G. FÜRSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

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